

The Naked Mountain



NANGA PARBAT

The Naked Mountain

by

ELIZABETH KNOWLTON



G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK : LONDON

1933

COPYRIGHT, 1933, BY ELIZABETH KNOWLTON

All rights reserved. This book, or parts thereof, must
not be reproduced in any form without permission.

**PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
BY THE VAN REES PRESS**

To My Mother

Foreword

IN this story of the German American Himalaya Expedition to Nanga Parbat, I have most carefully followed the facts, not only in the main outline of action, but in the smallest details. Much of it I experienced myself. The events which occurred when I was not present, with all their surrounding circumstances and the feelings of the actors, were faithfully reported to me, and even casual conversations repeated verbatim, by Herron and by others. I was able to get many interesting points, from the general talk afterward.

Of course no one day's climb, much less a long expedition, is keyed in a single mood; and it has been my special effort to bring out, through the facts, the varying colors of such an experience, for those who live it.

Many people have had a helpful part in this book. I speak at the end, of my very special indebtedness for material to Rand Herron. Other members of the Expedition also took much time and trouble to supply me with information, notably Fritz Wiessner all summer, and Herbert Kunigk while he was with us. The actual writing I could probably never have accomplished without my friend, Ruth Babson Kirkland: for months I saw her almost daily, as she went over different chapters with me, giving me her invaluable advice and encouragement. The completed manuscript was most thoroughly and carefully criticized for me by Robert L. M. Underhill. I wish also to express my appreciation of the work of others, too numerous to name, who have at my request read various portions of the book, so that I might have the benefit of their comment.

August 18, 1933.

E. K.

Contents

	PAGE
FOREWORD	vii
PROLOGUE—THE MOUNTAIN	3
CHAPTER	
I. BEGINNINGS	9
II. THE MAKING OF MOUNTAINEERS.....	22
III. ON THE WAY	28
IV. SRINAGAR	44
V. INTO THE HIMALAYAS	56
VI. LAST PREPARATIONS	77
VII. THE MOUNTAIN IMMANENT	83
VIII. THE QUESTION OF ROUTES.....	99
IX. CALAMITIES AND COOLIES	107
X. RECONNAISSANCE	120
XI. SETTLEMENT AT THE SNOW-LINE.....	134
XII. WORKING ON THE MOUNTAIN.....	144
XIII. RAKIOT PEAK	165
XIV. THE WORLD OF THE SNOW.....	178
XV. CRESCENDO—AND DIMINUENDO	189
XVI. AT CAMP FOUR	212
XVII. EPISODE—ABOVE 20,000 FEET	226
XVIII. UNDER THE RIDGE	242
XIX. BASE CAMP IDYLL	261
XX. THE FINAL ATTACK	268
XXI. BASE CAMP IDYLL—CONCLUDED	279
XXII. FINIS	290
EPILOGUE—THE MOUNTAIN AND THE MEN.....	294
RAND HERRON	301
APPENDICES	313
INDEX	331

Illustrations

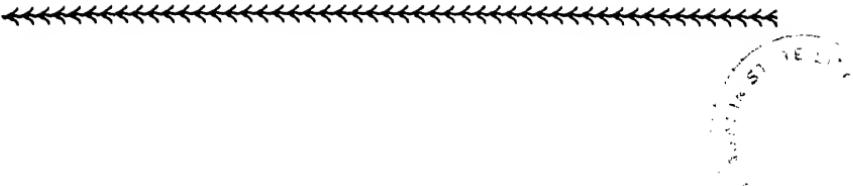
	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
Nanga Parbat	4
On the Steamer	4
On the Mountain	4
Snow and Ice on Nanga Parbat.....	20
“The Himalayas! . . .”	36
“...Our Long Shadows Lay Beside Us”	52
“Great Holes Were Churned into Bottomless Softness”.....	68
“Days at Astor Making Last Preparations Passed Pleasantly”	68
“The Scouts Might Be in Sight of Its Snows”.....	84
Nanga Parbat from the Fairytale Meadow.....	116
“...The Last Rocks at the Foot of Nanga Parbat...The Steep Ice-fall Rising to the First Plateau . . .”	120
Expedition Characters	128
A Small Avalanche on the North Face.....	132
“So the Work Went On, Pushing Camps Up the Mountain”	148
Seracs	152
“...The Summit Peak, and the South Face, Everywhere Terrifically Steep”	160
“...Traveling with the Coolies”	164
“...Over a Snowbridge”	164
“At Camp Four, We Had Front Seats to See the Show”.....	180
Camp Six in the Mulde.....	196
“...The Nearby Seracs Had Begun to Seem Like Home . . .”	212
On the Way to Camp Five—the Karakorums in the Distance	228

Illustrations

	FACING PAGE
The Ridge	244
“...The Weather Had Grown Daily Grimmer and More Threatening ...”	260
“...Drew Breath on the Plateau”.....	276
“The Tents Were Almost Buried”	276
“Nanga Parbat! ...”	292
Rand Herron	308
<i>Plan of Peaks, Ridges and Glaciers of Nanga Parbat Massif</i>	100
<i>Plan of Climbing Route on Nanga Parbat, from Fairytale Meadow</i>	116

The Naked Mountain
~~~~~





## Prologue

### THE MOUNTAIN

#### I

**N**ANGA PARBAT rises beyond the Vale of Kashmir. *Nanga Parbat, the Naked Mountain—a tremendous massif, bare rock ice-sheathed, and gleaming snows. Avalanches pour roaring down its precipices. Crevasses break, and yawn wider and wider. Stonefalls thunder all through the night. Naked of life, naked of warmth and safety, bare to the sun and stars, beautiful in its stark snowy loneliness, the Mountain waits. . . .*

*Those who will attack it, must stand ready for that meeting to strip themselves of all the ordinary things that men desire, all the normal and easy and gracious things of life—ready even, if need be, to give up life, itself. In return, the Mountain offers them hardship, and danger, . . . and an unattainable goal.—It tests them with stern trials. Such a peak seldom need exert its strength. For the little insects who challenge its immensities, it sets high the conditions of victory; and it lets them defeat themselves. Every secret weakness of body or mind or spirit will be mercilessly bared. Only if some persist, if, stripped to essentials, they continue the fight, then at last it will act. And it is far stronger than they. There is no shame in being beaten by such an antagonist. . . .*

*But to those men who are born for mountains, the struggle can never end, until their lives end. To them, it holds*

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

*the very quintessence of living—the fiery core, after the lesser parts have been burned away....*

*On earth there is nothing physically greater than the great unconquered peaks. There is nothing more beautiful. Among their barren snows they hide the ultimate simplicities of spiritual splendor....*

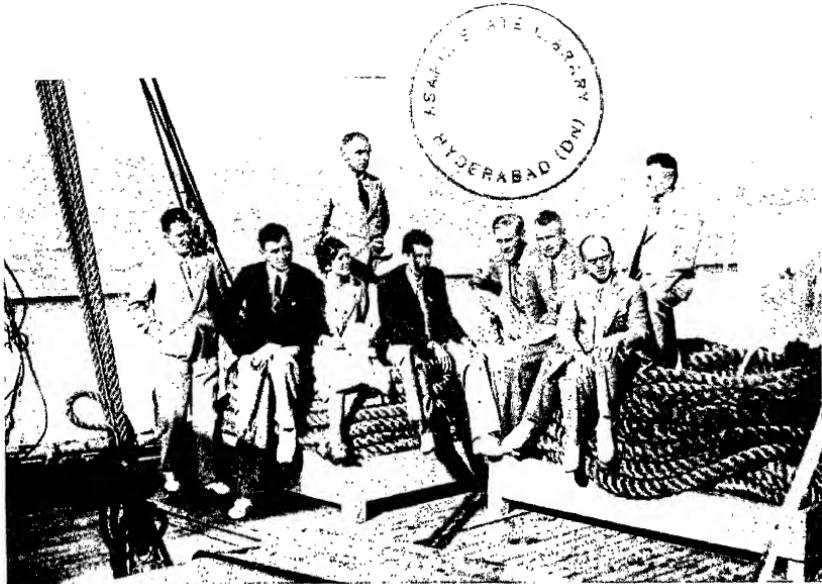
### II

Nanga Parbat rises beyond the Vale of Kashmir—far in the northwest corner of the Indian Empire, dominating the western end of the long Himalayan range. It is the seventh highest summit in the world, higher than any yet attained by man.

It is not easy to reach this mountain, nor even to see it. Lord of the Western Himalayas, it does not, like Everest and Kanchenjunga nine hundred miles away to the eastward, show itself to all who have the time for a weekend rail excursion. Of the many different names by which it is known, one is 'The Hidden Mountain.'

From the railhead, one must motor through almost two hundred miles of minor ranges, just to come to the Vale of Kashmir. Still from its green plain, gleaming with flooded rice fields, with long rows of willows, and flashing of bright-plumaged birds, one can scarcely glimpse the mountain. One must climb high up the side of the Pir Panjal, that walls the Vale to the south, to Gulmarg among the pine trees, on the edge of the highest pastures. From there, on a clear morning just before sunrise, one may at last see Nanga Parbat.

Very far away it floats in the sky, above the dark-green misty plain, above the nearer ranges still blue in dawn shadow. Its peaks and shoulders gleam pale gold, as the first



#### ON THE STEAMER

*Standing*—Aschenbrenner, Simon

Dr. Hamberger, Bechtold, Knowlton, Herron, Kunigk, Merkl, Wiessner



#### ON THE MOUNTAIN

*Standing*—Aschenbrenner, Simon

Lieut. Frier, Knowlton, Herron, Merkl, Wiessner



## *Prologue—The Mountain*

---

sun lights its snows. Then it covers itself with clouds, and for the rest of the day it is generally hidden from those who live in Kashmir.

It reveals itself only gradually, as the traveler draws nearer, journeying northward into the Himalayas, toward its isolated massif. From the Tragbal Pass one may, if fortunate, have a view of its distant magnificence—clustered white peaks against the blue horizon. Between Chillam and Godhai, there are some closer glimpses, of towering snow-points through the V-shaped valleys. Or if one crosses the Himalayas over the Kamri, it shows its southern face more frankly, as one goes almost by its foot.

But there is nowhere any place on earth from which one may hope to see the whole of Nanga Parbat—all of its peaks and shoulders, from north to south, or from east to west, all of it, from base to summit. It is too gigantic a thing. As we know mountains in other ranges, it seems more than a mere mountain. It is too vast and extended for any one viewpoint to grasp. On whatever side one may approach it, the greater part of it must always remain a 'hidden mountain.'

### III

Nanga Parbat has many names and many aspects. Stories and traditions cluster round it, like the clouds that so often wrap its summit. It has its own deity, the spirit of the mountain, to whom the natives pray. Its Urdu name, Nanga Parbat—'Naked Mountain'—comes, probably, from the bare rock of its tremendous precipices among the snows. There may, however, be some other reason for this title, lost in the far past; for its origin is older than history. Diamir, its Dard name, means the 'Dwelling Place of the Fairies.' According to ancient legends, a race of spirits or

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

djinns lives on its upper slopes, and of those who die near the mountain, some are chosen to share their immortality.

It has few stories of men, for always it has been inviolate. Few people have even been close around its base. Though travelers have praised and poets sung its beauties from a distance, there is not a great deal that tells of any nearer knowledge.

One man's name is intimately associated with it, that of Mummery.

### IV

Only once in the past was any serious attempt made to climb Nanga Parbat.

In 1895, in those heroic days of mountaineering, when attacking a great Himalayan peak was still thought of as a casual individual adventure, not a great organized effort, four Englishmen wandered in to the foot of the mountain. They were J. Norman Collie, famous for first ascents all over the world; Captain the Hon. C. G. Bruce, a noted explorer of Indian ranges, G. Hastings, and A. F. Mummery, one of the greatest names in the history of mountaineering. They took with them half a dozen or so coolies, and ordinary Alpine equipment. At that time so little climbing had been done above twenty thousand feet, that even the effect of that altitude on the climbing possibilities of the human body was an exciting uncertainty.

The men approached the mountain from the south, by the deep V-shaped valley of Rupal Nullah. After one look at its terrific south face, that drops almost perpendicularly for about eighteen thousand feet from the summit, they gave up all thought of attack from that side, and began a reconnoitering campaign, with minor skirmishes and first ascents on nearby peaks. Using on these giants ordinary

## *Prologue—The Mountain*

---

Alpine technique, expecting to cross a high pass or reach a summit in a day or two, they went through tremendous adventures, and reveled in hardships and amazing conquests.

Gradually they worked round to the northwest side of Nanga Parbat, to the Diamirai Glacier. About this time, Bruce and Hastings left the party. Mummery, climbing alone with two coolies, followed up the Diamirai Glacier, and on up the steep rocks of Nanga Parbat, reaching a height in only two days of climbing of almost twenty thousand feet. Here one of his coolies was taken sick, and he regretfully came down again. He told Collie that because of the combination of difficulties of rock and difficulties of altitude it was by far the hardest climb he had ever done. And well it might have been. It was a remarkable achievement.

The mountain still challenged, and Mummery thought there might be an easier way from the next nullah to the east. It would be a weary march of several days up and down over the lesser hills, to come around to this nullah. Collie offered to make that trip and take most of the coolies and equipment. Mummery then would attempt a short cut over the Diami Pass between Ganalo and North Peaks, a terrific snow pass over a main shoulder of the mountain. If it seemed too difficult, he was to turn back. But Mummery was always known as a person who did not easily turn back. He started up the glacier with his two coolies. . . . None of them were ever seen again.

When Collie did not find Mummery at the meeting place, a thorough search was made. But no traces were found, beyond the very beginning of the route.

The men were probably caught and overwhelmed in an avalanche. Nanga Parbat is noted, even among the Himalayas, for the size and terror of its avalanches. All we know

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

surely is that somewhere in its snows lies buried the great climber, Mummery.

There had been no real attempt to conquer the mountain since those days, until our Expedition started.

### v

Nanga Parbat is generally called one of the most beautiful mountains in the world.

“King among kingly mountains,” F. R. addresses it in verse. “The most isolated and perhaps the most imposing of all the peaks of Asia,” comments Colonel Burrard. “Everest, Kanchenjunga, all the other giants,” adds Candler, “rise from great mountain chains or high tablelands. Nanga Parbat the incomparable . . . stands alone, a patent goddess.”

Among the most remarkable mountain views in existence, is ranked the sight of Nanga Parbat from Bunji, fifteen miles away to the northward, the precipices and snow slopes of its northern face, framed in the bare maroon hills of the Indus Valley, towering up from the river almost twenty-three thousand feet. It is beautiful, too, as one approaches from the south, its snowy ramparts overtopping the nearer hills. It is beautiful from Gulmarg, a far white pyramid, floating above the Kashmir plains at sunrise.

But greatest of all is the beauty it reveals, to the mountaineers who are privileged to win their way far up its sides, and live among its snows.



---

## *Chapter I*

### BEGINNINGS

#### I

UNDER the high dim lights, the Munich railroad station looked almost deserted. Shutters were down in front of all the book-stalls, porters had gone home for the night, and only a few passengers crossed the vast dingy cave of the concourse, to enter the empty platforms. For the hour was well on toward twelve o'clock.

Only around one gate, a large crowd had gathered—a quiet, dignified crowd, made up mostly of men. They were talking together in low voices, or waiting silently alone, as if assembled for some important event. In the midst of the press, each the nucleus of a group of friends, stood several sturdy-looking men, with raincoats over their arms, and suitcases or rucksacks beside them. Among them, a black-haired six-foot American was conspicuous by his height; and nearby a very blond German youth towered four inches above him. The other travelers were all of shorter and squarer build. These were the members of the German American Himalaya Expedition; and they were about to start for Nanga Parbat.

Bauer had come to see them off, a strong, calm-faced individual, leader of two desperate attempts on Kanchen-junga, probably the most famous feats in the history of Himalayan mountaineering. With him were some of his companions on those ventures. They were old friends of

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

the members of this Expedition, and had helped it with much valuable information about food and equipment. There were also present most of the other climbing notables and lesser-notables of Munich.

As the time of the train's departure drew near, stirrings of excitement began to pass through the crowd. It gradually drifted out of the gate, and filled the train platform in a shifting, milling mass. It became noisily talkative, with good-bys and last messages. Reporters appeared from nowhere, and ran about with flashlight apparatus, frantically trying to organize groups of the Expedition, groups that broke up even as they got them together. There was more and more talk, and much hand-shaking.

The Expedition members climbed up on to the steps of the train. Last messages were called back and forth. The crowd was now thickly packed far down the platform. The guard whistled. The members rushed to their compartment and leaned three deep out the window. The train slowly started. The platform became a mass of running men and waving hands.

“Heil!” called the Expedition men, waving and waving, “Heil! Heil!” From those outside a long, deep cheer answered. Far ahead down the platform the full tones rolled, as more and more voices joined in. The train pulled out of the station, followed by a low long-continued roar of cheering. . . . The sound died out in the distance. The German American Himalaya Expedition was on its way.

All across Germany and Austria the Expedition passed to that stirring accompaniment of men cheering. At Rosenheim, after midnight, where the doctor got on board, a small crowd saw him off, with “Heils!” and climbing songs. Later, at Kufstein, the home of another member, there were forty or fifty singing, shouting men. And finally as the

## *Beginnings*

---

train drew into Innsbruck in Austria, in the dead hour before dawn, the members were wakened by the full-throated thunder of a German chorus. The large and enthusiastic climbing club of Innsbruck, after a convivial night, had come down en masse, to cheer the travelers through the European mountains.

### II

It was on the train, traveling from Munich to Genoa, that I first met all the members of the German American Himalaya Expedition, and there I also learned all the details of its beginnings....

Various German climbers had long been eager to attempt the Himalayas. Nanga Parbat (26,620 feet), seventh highest mountain in the world, and higher than any summit ever reached, had for some years been thought of as an objective. It was the highest known peak that seemed to offer good chances of success.

Of the greater ones, Everest, the goal of three earlier expeditions, must be counted out, for at that time it seemed impossible to get Thibetan government permission to enter its territory. (The next spring another British expedition actually succeeded in gaining admission, and, for the fourth time, Everest defeated its besiegers.) Kanchenjunga, already three times desperately attacked, appeared to have extreme technical difficulties. K<sub>2</sub>, Makalu, and the other two less-known giants would be only problematically possible, and far more difficult of access.

Nanga Parbat also had the advantage for climbing purposes over Everest, Kanchenjunga, and the rest of the Eastern Himalayan peaks, in its freedom from the monsoon. This always rigidly limits the activities of climbers

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

to the period of a month or two either just before or just after it. On Nanga Parbat, although storms and unsettled weather were understood to be frequent, there was not expected to be any such fixed period of unclimbability.

Nanga Parbat had never been completely surveyed with an eye to successful climbing, for Mummery's examination eliminated only the southern face. The great Nanga Parbat massif, with its fifteen or twenty peaks, runs roughly east and west, with arms projecting to the north, so any eastern or western attempt would be futile, involving going along a whole range, to reach the summit peak. But there seemed good reason to think that from some one of the nullahs, or V-shaped valleys, on the northern side, there might be a possible route. There was, first, a chance of conquest by Mummery's "very difficult rocks" above the Diamirai Glacier, of which Collie wrote "the only climbing in the Alps I can compare it to is that on the Chamonix Aiguilles." The fervent study of maps had showed also the possibility of a way up either the Rakiot or the Buldar Glacier. Of any previous exploration of these possibilities, the most earnest search of climbing literature, in German and in English, had found no trace. Somewhere here the Expedition hoped to find the point for a successful attack on the mountain.

### III

The men of our Expedition were a group of unusually experienced mountaineers. It had taken them over two years, just to get together; as there had been all sorts of changes and shifts in the original plans, and the original personnel. Two sets of climbers in Germany had pooled their ideas and forces; the American, Rand Herron, had

## *Beginnings*

---

come from New York to Munich to join them; two or three German climbing clubs had sent selected members: and so it had grown.

In the final count, there were seven in the climbing party. For all of these men there was a history of great ascents on great peaks. Just the list of their climbs would, to those who know, read like an epic of brilliant mountaineering.

This was the personnel of the Expedition:

Willy Merkl, of Munich, was the leader. He was accompanied by his close friend and old schoolmate, Fritz Bechtold, of Trostberg, Bavaria, a very fine amateur in mountain photography, who acted as photographer for the Expedition. These two had always been inseparable, and had been climbing together for about twenty years; they were now thirty-two. As schoolboys they had started going into the Bavarian Alps south of Munich. They had learned rock technique in the Kaisergebirge, and snow and ice in summer ascents and winter ski trips in the Bavarian and Austrian Alps. They had always climbed guideless. They had begun to lead difficult first ascents, younger than some men start climbing, and now they had a long and remarkable list to their credit. With a third companion, they had made an expedition to the Caucasus, where they had done fine solid work. All summer they and Herron would match reminiscences—"When I was in the Caucasus . . ."

Rand Herron of New York, the first American to take part in any of the great post-war Himalayan climbing expeditions, acted as assistant leader. He was rapidly becoming known as one of our most important younger mountaineers. Among the Teutons, mostly short, square, stolid men, he stood six feet—long-legged, black-headed, and eager. He had been born and brought up in Europe, and had begun

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

his climbing with Italians and French, and continued with Germans. Though he had dreamed of mountaineering from early boyhood, he had been able actually to begin only seven years before. He had done his best to make up for lost time, however. He had started on rock, climbing guideless, with such fabulous feats as leading the Vajolet Towers in the Dolomites, twice in one day, in his second climbing season. He had specialized in the more difficult and out-of-the-way rock climbs, wandering over the mountain ranges of Europe from Olympus to the Pyrenees, and making many first ascents, often alone. He had also had good experience in snow and ice, on many of the famous routes in the Mont Blanc massif, and in expeditions to Morocco, the High Atlas, Lapland in winter, and the Caucasus, where with three friends, he was first to conquer the famous and frequently attempted peak, Gulchi (14,680 feet). He had come into the group through his friendship with Wiessner in New York.

Fritz Wiessner, of Dresden and New York, was one of the organizers of the Expedition. He also had climbed guideless all his life from early boyhood. He was notably brilliant on rock, having made, among other climbs, a first ascent in the Kaisergebirge which is sometimes called one of the most difficult rock climbs in the world. He knew the mountains equally well in winter, as a fine skier and ski jumper, and was an outstanding expert on snow and ice conditions.

With him came his friend, Felix Simon, of Leipzig, a veteran mountaineer of over forty, the only member of the party beyond that good climbing age of thirty-two. Simon could count more than two hundred ascents to his credit. "The two Saxons"—he and Wiessner were always called. [Their accent was slightly different from the Bavarian, and

## *Beginnings*

---

there seemed a real feeling of regional consciousness and pride on both sides.

Peter Aschenbrenner, of Kufstein, Austria, had been climbing only a few years, but was already well known in Europe as a very fine professional guide, though on this Expedition he came only as an amateur, in no different standing from the others. The coolies, who had nicknames for most of us, christened him, in a group not exactly made up of weaklings, "the Strong Sahib."

Herbert Kunigk, of Munich, was the baby of the party, and the giant, twenty-four years old and six feet four inches tall, very blond, and well built. He was sometimes jokingly called the "Schmuck (or Ornament) of the Expedition." Already he had done much brilliant climbing, mostly guideless, and moved gracefully and beautifully on both rock and ice.

We had, for our medical man, Dr. Hugo Hamberger of Rosenheim, Bavaria. He was also somewhat of a climber, and had made ascents with "the Bavarians," Merkl and Bechtold.

I was the other non-climbing and the second American member of the Expedition, introduced by Herron and Wiessner, whom I had known in a climbing club in New York. As I had made many ascents, both on rock and on ice, I had enough technical knowledge to write soundly, so I had been brought in at the last moment to handle the English-speaking newspaper work. I also took on all sorts of other jobs.

We had hoped to have with us two scientists, but the straitened money situation of their scientific societies finally prevented them from going. Our Expedition had been financed by the German and Austrian Alpine Club, and by its own members, each of whom had put in what he

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

could afford toward the common end. So we were not rich, and unfortunately had nothing extra for scientific purposes.

The regret among us was not too strong, however. L. H. Robbins, who views that strange order of being, the climber, from outside, observes: "A climbing expedition will never dream of starting out for the other side of the globe without . . . a scientist or two . . . to lend a look of sobriety to the undertaking."\* Our members, on the other hand, seemed to find a certain definite pride in being able to say, "No, we shall *not* survey, or map, or geologize, or study climate or plant life. Our only object is to climb Nanga Parbat." Mountaineering, we all felt, justifies itself.

### IV

From the time that rumors of the Expedition first began to spread, people appeared, eager to be taken on. Letters from all varieties of applicants began to pour in to the leader, in Germany, and even after we reached India. There was, for example, the big-game hunter, who was sure he would be a useful addition, and as proof of his prowess sent a series of snapshots, representing him with his foot planted firmly on various sorts of large dead animals. There was the German woman wanderer, who offered herself to act as a "gute deutsche Hausfrau." There were adventurous young men galore, and there were middle-aged, comparatively sedentary men, too.

The general spirit which seemed to be in most of these people shone most clearly perhaps through the naïve heroics of a young Indian lad of nineteen. This was his letter. "Herr Willy Merkl. Dear Sir: . . . I have come to know that

\* L. H. Robbins, *Mountains and Men*.

## *Beginnings*

---

you are about to climb Nanga Parbat. My zeal for dangerous adventure is so great that I would be very glad if you would allow me to accompany you and your party on this perilous expedition.

“Being yourself a very adventurous man, I am sure you will appreciate my zeal for this exploit . . . I sincerely hope you will allow me to partake of the perils and thrills of the Expedition.” Herron and I, who handled the English-speaking correspondence, found ourselves agreed in tempering as much as possible the iciness of the cold water, which we were compelled to dash on the ambitions of this ambitious youth.

Of course, buried as we then were in lists, and accounts, and provision buying, and all material considerations, we felt this romantic note quite incongruous—this lofty emphasis on adventure comically forced. Mountaineers do not, any more than other men engaged in more or less dangerous pursuits, go around full of heroics. They take danger merely as an unfortunate part of the day’s work, very carefully avoiding every bit of it that they possibly can. They are practical people.

So we always smiled a little over such applicants as this one. But deep inside, there was one secret part of us that understood, and even sympathized. Lion-hunter or accountant, newspaper man or famous walker, whatever their qualification or lack of it, the letter-writers did sound like a good sort, most of them. They had the root of the matter in them.

### v

Answering applicants’ letters proved only one of the least of the many clerical jobs of such an expedition. The mechanics of its building were elaborate, slow-moving and

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

complicated. 'Lists, and accounts, and provision buying, and all material considerations'—I wonder if any one who has not been in the thick of it, has any conception of what a dominating part these play. Many months before it was to start, that work began.

First came for the climbers long discussions, talks with others who had organized expeditions, examination of old lists from their own former expeditions, checkovers of food by kilograms, comparisons of the goods of different firms, of qualities of tents, weights and prices of cloth for clothing. Some business houses, especially those with food products, offered their goods free, or at greatly reduced rates, partly from their interest in promoting the glory of the German nation through expeditions, partly from the advertising value of supplying us. Which of these two motives weighed the more heavily with them one cannot know, but anyway we profited from the results.

Lists must be checked and rechecked, comparisons made, orders given,—and tents and ice axes, leberwurst and rindfleisch and cans of powdered milk, snow-goggles and cream against glacial sunburn, porters' clothes, and crampons, carpenters' tools, and spare parts, began to pile up in the Expedition warehouse.

Four or five weeks before the date of sailing, work at the warehouse began. All the members came there, to do hard, manual labor, for all of the time they could give, getting those tons of material ready for the long journey to Nanga Parbat. Tents and sacks must all be stenciled with their numbers, and with the name DAHE, (pronounced Dah-hay), that strange new name, which before the summer was over was to be the most familiar of household words — "Deutsch-Amerikanische Himalaya-Expedition." Boxes must be packed and nailed, and again DAHE must appear

## *Beginnings*

---

upon them. Some thirty metal drums were most painstakingly washed to get them entirely free of their former contents of oil, and filled with small hard crackers resembling water crackers with caraway seed, known as zwieback; and then the drums were closed by soldering. These tins, incidentally, turned out later to have a secondary, but most important, use. They became our dining-room suite, the smaller size serving as chairs and the larger as little private dining tables, all of them arranged every morning in a row, by our attentive servants, and every evening in a circle around the base camp bonfire.

Every one put in at least eight or nine full days of the hardest kind of work, before the hundred and one boxes, bags, drums, and bundles were at last ready, and started on ahead by freight to our port of Genoa.

### VI

There are yet more and more details of preparation for such an expedition—diplomatic details, for instance. We were to venture into the territory of a native Indian state politically subordinate to the British, and all sorts of official permissions were required. There must be many sessions with the British Consul, and with the German Foreign Office, which was sponsoring us. Even on Saturday, when the Expedition was leaving Munich on Tuesday, a last-minute problem forced Merkl and Herron to make a trip to Berlin in order to straighten it out—rather a breath-taking interruption to final preparations. And when we left Germany, through an unfortunate series of misunderstandings not all our necessary permissions had been secured. This was the cause of much excitement later, as will appear in due course.

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

Then there was the making of arrangements with the press, in America, in Germany, and in India.

Not to speak of all the personal preparations—the collecting and packing of all the special individual equipment, clothes, and toilet articles, necessary for tropical heat and sun, and Arctic cold and storms, and for living completely away from civilization for three or four months.

Every one also must be overhauled by a doctor and a dentist, and inoculated for typhoid, paratyphoid, typhus, and a whole list of tropical diseases for good measure.

A climbing expedition to the Himalayas has a great deal to it besides danger and far romance. It is founded on hard work and plenty of it, and its roots go back a long way before the starting train and the crowd and the cheers.

### VII

Some climbers might find it fanciful and ridiculous to speak of this sort of humdrum, prosaic building-up of a great mountain expedition as having almost a religious quality. For them the feeling underneath remains deep-buried and unanalyzed, and their conscious minds are entirely preoccupied with the countless fatigues and annoyances of the preparation.

Details pile upon details. There are the inevitable mistakes and troubles, the standard last-minute delays in necessary articles. And always the lists, lists, lists. Innumerable and interminable lists and lists. Any one who has prepared for a few months of foreign travel for himself and his family may form a partial idea of the work involved, by remembering that expeditions include many people, and must be completely self-dependent and self-sustaining, when out of touch with everything for months at a time. It would be



JUMPING A CREVASSSE



ROPE DOWN INTO A CREVASSSE

DIGGING AN ICE CAVE

SNOW AND ICE ON NANGA PARBAT



## *Beginnings*

---

a bad thing if the workers should forget any of the tools, or nails, or sewing kit, or writing materials, or medicines. Every smallest item must be thought of, down to red paper for a dark-room window, and extra smoked glasses for broken snow goggles. Deep drowned in details—writing letters, visiting officials, shopping and ordering, stenciling and hammering—the members of the Expedition worked those last weeks.

Yet, whether conscious or subconscious, there was in the climbers, in the midst of these activities, a feeling rather like that of devout medieval workmen, busied together in builders' and masons' tasks on a great cathedral. They, too, were all combining their efforts to make a great thing. Their day-by-day labor went toward bringing to actuality a hope and a dream.

## VIII

Among the 'Eight-thousanders' of the world—as the Continentals call those peaks higher than 8,000 meters, of which there are only fifteen or twenty, all unclimbed—Nanga Parbat seemed to offer the climber as good chances of success as any. It was a very strong party of experienced men that had been gathered together for our Expedition. Everything was, as far as was humanly possible, ready and in order. With high hopes we set out to the attack.

---

*Chapter II*

## THE MAKING OF MOUNTAINEERS

## I

THE departure from Munich might be called the official beginning of our Expedition. Before that, had come the inception of the idea, and the preparations. But in any important climbing undertaking, there is always a past that stretches back for many years behind its recorded history: fine mountaineers are not made in a day. Those with really thorough minds, who like to carry things to their sources, might see this Expedition as having started some fifteen or eighteen years ago, when a few boys, reaching the age when youngsters begin to give up casual outdoor play, elected to take rope and ice-axe, and turn seriously to mountains.

## II

Climbing is more than a sport—it is almost a way of life. What draws people to it, is hard to say. It does not appeal exclusively to any one type, or any one temperament, or any one occupation. Mountaineers seem to come largely from the professional classes, but this may be merely because many of them have the best opportunity for long vacations. Most of our men happened to be engineers. Wiessner was a chemist, Herron a musician. Many English climbers teach in universities, as Mallory of Everest, and

## *The Making of Mountaineers*

---

Geoffrey Winthrop Young. Whymper of the Matterhorn was an artist, and Mummery of Nanga Parbat, a business man.

By the psychologically or philosophically inclined, all sorts of motives are found for climbing,—from the satisfaction, for the intellectual, of dealing with tangibles, to compensation for an inferiority complex. Not to speak of the more obvious rewards it offers: outdoor life, unusually interesting muscular exercise, natural beauty, adventure and danger. But all these might draw one in some very different direction. The great fundamental, I once heard summed up in the phrase of a famous guide, "a feeling for mountains."

That, above all, one must have, ever to become outstanding as a mountaineer. Granted that, then the long years which are required for improvement in skill pass quickly. Every climb is taken for the joy of it; and what in sports would be dry and wearisome practice, becomes here part of the pleasure of the doing, and the companionship of the hills.

### III

But there is a great deal to be learned. Mountaineering has a most elaborate technique—two differing techniques, in fact, that of rock and that of snow and ice. Some men start with one, and some with the other. The majority of our group began their mountain contact with rock-climbing.

Practicing on boulders, searching out nearby cliffs for week-end diversion, traveling eagerly in the summers to various meccas of rock-climbers, where bare rock rises thousands of feet in walls and buttresses, castles and pinnacles, the rock-climber gradually develops his technique. He learns the ways and the proper use of nailed boots, of dif-

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

ferent sorts of scarpitti or kletterschuhe, of sneakers—all the varied footgear favored by rock-men for their work. He becomes expert in side holds and pressure holds, wedge holds following up a crack, back-and-foot or back-and-knee work up a chimney.

By the proper use of infinitesimal holds for hands and for feet, by an unspeakably delicate and complicated interrelation of stresses and strains, a relation shifting every moment, and involving all the muscles, big and small, of the body, he gradually becomes able to move lightly and quickly, without undue effort, up and down the bare rock of almost perpendicular faces; to crawl fly-like over their surfaces, clinging, as a favorite climber's joke says, "to discolorations in the rock"; and to perform easily the apparently impossible.

He becomes intimate with the ways of the rope, which turns two or three individuals into a climbing unit, much stronger than any one of its parts. He learns how the rope may be used by the stationary man to secure the moving man, with the methods of anchors, and direct and indirect belays. He learns the many tricks one can do with it, to circumvent the power of the mountain—as roping down, lassoing, rope traverses. And he has it well driven home to him that the rope in the hands of the inexperienced may become a liability instead of an asset, an entanglement and danger, rather than a factor of safety. Thus he becomes rope-conscious when moving, as well as when stationary, so that every moment, just as definitely as he feels and controls the actions of his own limbs, he feels and controls the rope. He discusses knots with his friends—bowlines and square knots, middleman's knots and butterflies. Through all this, he becomes initiated into the elaborate and complicated ritual of the rope on rock, and prepared to pick

## *The Making of Mountaineers*

---

up quickly the slight variations he finds in its use on snow and ice.

Sometimes the man who begins with rock-climbing, stops there, fascinated in continually improving his one technique. But generally he finds himself drawn to the higher peaks, where he must know the ways of snowfields and glaciers. Our men all became interested in snow and ice. There, the climber learns to kick steps in soft snow, to edge his nails into hard-snow slopes, and to walk fast and securely on steep ice, clinging with the long points of his crampons, those iron claws one binds to one's boots to save step-cutting. He learns to glissade on his feet down steep snow, turning or stopping with the perfect control of a skier. He becomes speedy as well as safe on every sort of going, so that he can put through long difficult climbs and not be benighted. When he reaches this point, he has acquired all the technical knowledge necessary safely to follow an experienced leader.

Then gradually he gains enough experience to lead, himself: to find the best way up difficult rock, or among the ice-towers and crevasses of a steep glacier, to test snow-bridges with intelligence, to decide which rock couloirs to avoid for fear of falling stones, and which snow slopes may avalanche. He develops the skill to cut steps with his ice-axe, quickly, and without unnecessary exertion, on ice or on hard snow, with just the right swing and flick for the different sorts of surface.

As a leader of new climbs, he learns something of the strategy as well as the technique of mountaineering; to understand and take the best advantage of weather conditions, and to plan the best route up a virgin peak, utilizing the natural contours of the terrain, while still avoiding ways threatened by avalanches or stonefalls.

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

### IV

Such a climber is at last ready to make an expedition to the Himalayas, the greatest mountains of all. These expeditions call for everything needed in minor ascents, and for more besides.

For the presumptuous attacker of these giants must meet not only the technical problems offered by other mountains. These are not the same on any two of the titans: on one the major difficulty may prove to be with rock; on another, ice; on another, snow. To make a first ascent on a new peak, conquering only such problems as are common to all large ranges, the climber must be ready with a long list of qualities: great strength, and endurance, and perfection of technique—all developed by years of training; the vigilance of a continual caution that has become an ingrained habit; a knowledge of general mountain conditions, garnered in years of experience; and a natural good judgment, in order to determine when to press on through difficulties, and when to turn back to avoid disaster.

To all these, something more must be added, for the Himalayas. In some things the greatest peaks are all alike. They all oppose, to the ability of the mountaineer, the dragging sickening burden of altitude, that most terrible handicap; the uncertainties and infinite delays of weather—wind, cold and storm; and a sheer bulk of size, which prevents the possibility, as on lesser peaks, of escaping any of their weapons by a brief successful dash. The man who attempts Himalayan climbing must prepare himself for the wearing down of a long siege. He will need to bring to it the character that can stand firm toward the goal, through weeks and months of those petty irritations, and discomforts, and disappointments, so much harder to meet than danger or

*The Making of Mountaineers*

---

major difficulties; and the temperament of the fighter, that never admits defeat. . . .

v

Of course every great climber has some weak points. But most, at least, of these abilities and qualities will be found in every one of them. And beyond all this, the greatest, like Mallory on Everest, have been consumed by a flame and a burning passion of desire that drives them on when everything else fails.

---

### *Chapter III*

#### ON THE WAY

##### I

“OFF at last, on the greatest adventure in the world! The stirring moments of embarkation at Genoa passed, and now every day of languorous idleness on tropic seas was bringing us nearer to the country of our future conflict.” That, as I had thought in anticipation about the voyage to India, was rather the way I had expected it to feel.

But it was not like that, in any respect. There was no excitement left for Italy. Every one was far too tired, after the rush of getting off, and after those last great moments, when we had crossed Germany to the sound of singing and cheering through the night.

Then in Genoa petty travel troubles developed,—just as they might have done on a less glorious enterprise. The situation there had its humorous aspects. Among thundering avalanches or on perilous ice-slopes, these sturdy climbers would have been the last word in capability,—but when it came to speaking Italian . . . ! Here Herron must suddenly assume a paternal rôle—Herron, the linguist, as much at home in Italian as in German, French or English. He rushed to the aid of strong men helpless, puzzled Teutons surrounded by jabbering and gesticulating Latins; he disentangled luggage complications with easy competence; questioned officials; and, translating back and forth in three

## *On the Way*

---

languages, efficiently unwound for us all the absurdly elaborate red tape of embarkation. But in the midst of these confusions, there was no chance left for thrills.

Neither was there to be on shipboard any of that languorous ease I had anticipated: everybody was busy.

Now I was learning more and more how different real expeditions are from all one's preconceived ideas,—how much less there is in them of picturesque romanticism, how much more of the vital meaning given to life by good hard prosaic work, toward an end worth working for. As I was to see the real thing, close to, all summer—the strong fabric of our purpose, patterned by all the many different colors and moods of day-by-day living—I was to find it far more interesting than any shiny tinsel of the imagined. . . .

### II

Our well-filled day on the boat began with exercises. Every morning all the climbers rose at six, mounted to the top deck in their gym costumes, and in air sufficiently warm but still fresh from the night, went through a strenuous setting-up drill. Aschenbrenner led them, and he kept them briskly on the move for half an hour. Then, a swim in the pool, and breakfast.

Afterward, there were lists to be copied in our "Dahe books"—medium-sized notebooks, with lined red-edged pages, and black leather covers with "DAHE 1932," printed in gold—extremely businesslike looking affairs. They had been presented to all of us, along with various maps and lists, on our departure from Germany. Each one became, before the summer was over, a sort of epitome of the Expedition, plus the character of the individual. To go through one now is to relive those months; for everything

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

went into them, in a glorious hodge-podge—lists, diaries, expense accounts, philosophical ideas. Mine, for instance, had sketches and notes of descriptive phrases, mixed up with the amounts of salt and ghi to give the coolies, and the contents of seven bags in the lower base camp. In Herron's, poems and pages of music jostled columns of medicines to take for headache and fever, rough drafts of answers to Expedition letters, or pages of black marks, in groups of fives, where he had counted the porters as they marched by. Merkl's was very neatly written, full of lists and lists of provisions and equipment, and columns and columns of figures, all elaborately indexed and cross-indexed.

Now into the blank pages of the “Dahe books” must be copied the first lists—interminably long ones, containing all the contents of all the bags and boxes that traveled with us, some of them in the hold, others, marked with a neat star, in the refrigerating room. Food was listed, equipment, photographic materials, everything, even to personal belongings—these indicated by initials, and classified, “old” or “new.” “Bergschuhe,” (climbing boots) read the lists, “Neue-W. M., K-(Kiste, or box) 21, Alte-W. M., K-12,” and so on, down to “Kravatten, 2 st. F. B., K-21.” This last item provided much amusement, since it was discovered that apparently Bechtold was the only one who had brought any neckties.

Then there were language classes. While I studied a German grammar industriously, and practiced my knowledge on every one I could get hold of, the rest were learning English for India. Herron conducted a conversation course, in the lounge after meals. The pupils would sit down both sides of the table, their after-dinner coffee cups and cigarettes in front of them, and Herron, seated at the end, would drill them.

## *On the Way*

---

*“Wo ist das Hotel?”*

“Where is the Hotel?” the class would shout, in chorus.

*“Bitte geben Sie mir ein Handtuche.”*

“Please give me a towel.”

*“I have lost my luggage.”*

Always the chorus chanted of need, trouble or loss—true picture of foreign travel.

For the hours still left in the day, each one had his own occupations. Merkl and Herron composed and sent vitally important, and expensive, cablegrams. Aschenbrenner and Bechtold worked over the goods in the hold, and overhauled photographic materials. Herron had also a full-time job, on which I, as the other English-speaking member, sometimes spelled him, in getting information from Mr. Ruttledge.

We were extremely fortunate in having on the boat with us Hugh Ruttledge, now famous as the leader of the 1933 Everest Expedition. We knew him only as a quiet, thin, middle-aged Englishman, traveling out to India with a guide, one of the noted Rey family of Courmayeur, to see if it were possible to make a way around Nanda Devi—a 25,000 foot mountain, from which precipitous ridges run out into other peaks, so that no climber has as yet succeeded in circumambulating its base.

No one could possibly have been kinder or more helpful to us than he was; and his intimate knowledge of India, after over twenty years as a Civil Administrator there, with numerous Himalayan exploring expeditions, was absolutely invaluable. So Herron spent many long steamship hours talking with him, getting all sorts of practical hints, about the technique of railway travel, the way to organize porters, and especially the precautions necessary against all the very serious dangers of tropical disease. As none of our Expedi-

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

tion had ever been in the East before, I have little doubt that the fact that we got through India without dysentery, sunstroke, or any of the many other major and minor illnesses which so often attack new expedition members fresh from Europe, was largely due to Mr. Ruttledge. Herron took copious notes of everything he told us, and repeated the advice and information, with dramatic emphasis, to the more skeptical climbers. Some of them were as hard to convince of the necessity of these picayune-sounding health precautions as husky schoolboys.

Mr. Ruttledge also helped us by dictating a list of the most necessary Urdu words—"Glacier," "Go on," or "Take care,"—complete with phonetic pronunciation, a list which Herron, already armed with two grammars of Urdu, and planning to add it to his ten other languages, studied thoroughly. He also translated the phonetic spelling into German, and the rest copied it. These lists of Mr. Ruttledge's were more and more referred to, as the summer went by, and our needs became apparent. And before the end of the trip we all had pretty well mastered them. Mr. Ruttledge also volunteered many other hints, while Herron or I stood ready with our note books.

No, those long idle days on shipboard, with their lazy dreaming of excitements to come, never did materialize. Of course one had time for an occasional breath of fresh air in the bow, or a siesta through the terrific afternoon heat. But there was always plenty of work waiting.

On a typical morning, one might see on one side of the lounge Merkl, leaning forward, absorbed, over a table covered with lists and figures; Aschenbrenner, just up from the hold, his forehead beaded with perspiration; Bechtold hurrying through, with photographic materials in both hands; Herron bent over another table pounding a type-

## *On the Way*

---

writer, or perhaps with Mr. Ruttledge, their heads close together, making notes on Urdu. Strictly business, everywhere, for every one.

### III

There were relaxations, between strenuosities.

Aschenbrenner had a birthday. Merkl made a neat little speech to him at dinner.

“Heil!” the others greeted him, standing and raising their champagne glasses, “Heil! Heil!”

“This is the happiest day of my life,” replied Aschenbrenner, smiling shyly. More toasts were drunk, and finally a second one standing, the glasses meeting and clinking across the table,—“Heil! DAHE!” deep-voiced and full, “Heil! DAHE!”

A big cake was brought in, with many candles. There were continual jokes and laughter, most of them centering round the mountain.

The others teased Herron about his appetite for ices, which was second only to his devotion to dark Münchner beer. “Look, he eats yet another ice! Rand shall go ahead of us up Nanga Parbat, and eat the ice off the mountain, to make it easy to climb.”

The waiter came with a toy, a white woolly dog from the ship’s shop, and presented it to Aschenbrenner. The others pulled at it, and roughed its hair. Aschenbrenner rescued it. “He is a good dog. He shall come with us, and guard the base camp at Nanga Parbat.”

In the lounge after coffee there was more drinking, pleasant and festive—nothing excessive, for these were mountaineers. As it grew late, and the strangers gradually left the room, Kunigk went to the piano and played old German

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

songs, and with Bechtold's strong true voice leading, the Germans sang and sang. There were jolly folk songs, martial songs, and one or two sentimental tunes. And the Bergsteigerslied, the Song of the Mountaineers: \*

“On! mountain comrade! Morning dawns,  
Climb upward to the sunny heights  
To our world above the clouds...”

the deep voices sang,

“We are the princes of this world,  
Our kingdom is the rock and ice! . .”

while the boat drove steadily forward toward India.

### IV

Now there began to creep into the shipboard life the color of the East, brought by passengers coming on board, or glimpsed on shore sight-seeing; as we passed through the Suez Canal, and the Red Sea, and landed at Port Said, and at Aden. Shy dark-faced women in saris slipped through the corridors, with turquoise nose-studs, and ankle-bracelets clinking. Turbaned, white-draped, barefooted men slept with their heads on their bundles on the hatchways. Awnings had been stretched over the decks, and sun helmets and shorts became the wear of the European passengers. Days and nights grew hotter and hotter, and exquisite silvery blue flying fish scudded in schools over the smooth Indian Ocean.

As we drew nearer to port, the climbers more and more roused themselves from their preoccupation with the work

\* See Appendix E, page 319.

## *On the Way*

---

of the shipboard days; and, like war-horses scenting the battle far-off, they began to talk of climbing. Conversation at meals grew continually more lively, each capping the other with tales of past ascents in those favorite German playgrounds, the Kaisergebirge and the Austrian Alps. Anecdotes and reminiscences came thicker and thicker, discussions of technique, and tricks on rock and ice.

And every one grew busier, not to forget any of the little last-minute details; so that everything might be finished, and ready in every respect, when we should land at Bombay.

### v

At Bombay stands the "Gateway to India." It stands on the water front, rising by steps straight out of the sea, the first thing to meet the eye of the traveler as he sails up the harbor. Really a modern structure, erected by the British in 1911, its design is based on that of sixteenth-century Indian buildings in Gujarat. Not a bad symbol for Bombay, which to the newly arrived Westerner seems partly still Europe, partly already Asia.

Bombay meant to us Business. No longer the comfortably occupied hours of the steamer, but a mad crowded rush of business. Yet behind it, and all mixed up with it, was Bombay. Graceful white-robed crowds moving along the city streets, and thronging the beaches, in the warm blue twilight. Long hours in consular offices, to arrange about our Expedition food and equipment coming in duty-free. The Indian Government graciously granted us that privilege. Luncheon with the omnipresent curry, stifling hot nights under punkahs or electric fans. Hurried visits to shops, and long consultations with editors in newspaper offices. Hasty interviews with reporters and group photog-

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

raphers. A big dinner given by the German Consul at a country club, in a patio with plaster walls, fountains, flowering vines and darting lizards. Sitting outside on the terrace afterwards—the civilized gleam of women's bare shoulders and men's shirt fronts, and the sound of tall tinkling glasses, in velvet tropical darkness with low-hanging silver stars. Long hours in the hotel writing-room, and frantic dashes to the Post Office, composing and getting off telegrams and letters and cables on Expedition business. And dark-skinned turbaned Post Office attendants waiting to take the telegrams out of one's hand, and save the sahib the trouble of carrying them to the windows, six feet away.

### VI

We gathered in the Bombay railroad station. Again we were taking a train. This time there was a sign by the gate that said "Frontier Mail—Peshawar and the North West Frontier."

Our one hundred and one bags, boxes and bundles had already been shipped by freight car. With us were a pile of suitcases, rucksacks, and typewriters. Every Expedition member also carried under his arm a quaint sort of identification—a ruffled white bed pillow, rolled up in a sheet. Just at the last moment, we had heard that passengers must take their own bedding on trains in India. We had tickets straight through to Jammu, in Kashmir, at the railhead—a two days' journey, with one change at Wazirabad. Our compartments were reserved, and the train officials had been told of us, and were ready to be especially helpful. We boarded the train. It started. We were speeding across India, off toward Nanga Parbat.

And suddenly the serious and businesslike men, of con-



"THE HIMALAYAS! . . ."  
From Camp Four on Nanga Parbat



## *On the Way*

---

sular and newspaper interviews at Bombay, vanished. The compartments were full of small boys, out for a holiday. Aschenbrenner with a shout sprang for an upper berth, and swung back and forth along it on his hands, kicking his feet, or tipping wildly head downward. Bechtold burst into a loud lively song, and others joined him. Herron threw back his head, and sent forth that wild high laughing shriek by which the Chamonix guides call great distances from peak to peak.

“Ah-h! ha! ha! ha-a-a! Ah-h! ha! ha! ha-a-a!”

Some one's shoes were pulled off, and roughhouses and wrestling matches started. Pandemonium reigned.

It might be inferred that the members of the German American Himalaya Expedition were setting out well, and in good spirits.

### VII

It was two days later.

With windows closed, and blinds down, and a great cake of ice in an open tank melting fast, and adding theoretically a little cool moisture to the air (temperature, 102° F), we had been crossing the Indian plains and deserts, baking under the sun of the beginning of the hot season. We had raised the blinds at sundown for the gracious moderating of the heat, and seen in the warm green twilight draped women carrying water jars from the wells, big gray monkeys sitting under the trees, naked beggars walking the long straight roads, and then through the deepening dusk of the plains the lights of the scattered villages. We had answered the innumerable questions of the numerous reporters that approached us, at the stations of the big cities. At Wazirabad we had changed trains, with a long walk along plat-

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

forms and over track-bridges, and had superintended the work of many draped and turbaned porters, the transference of one hundred and one Expedition bags, and thirty some pieces of personal luggage, with many careful checkings over, so that not one was lost.

Now, the train of our branch line was headed for Jammu, at the end of the railroad.

We rested in our compartments after the luggage transfer, and ate bananas and sweet crackers, and drank luke-warm soda water from the bottle. Then some one put his head out of the window to look at the country ahead. And gave a wild shout, "The Himalayas!" Far on the horizon, beyond the flat green plain, lay a long band of clouds, and above the clouds, here and there, floated faint white peaks. "The Himalayas." . . .

Every one was very silent, as we looked, and looked, and looked. The greatest mountains in the world. The supreme goal of the mountaineer. The scene for us of what future triumph, or defeat—perhaps even of tragedy. We had heard of them on the other side of the world, and they had brought us here. The Himalayas.

... The train swung around a curve, and we lost sight of them. We drew in our heads, and took long breaths, and smiled at one another, still rather dazed. There was a pause.

"Come on," said Herron, half-laughing, "let's find out who is most affected from seeing them!" And he very carefully counted all our pulses. They were all well above normal. But Aschenbrenner insisted that his was increased simply from running round looking after baggage in the heat—not from the sight of the mountains, at all.

I remembered then a day in New York. It was when I was getting ready to go on the Expedition. Herron and I

## *On the Way*

---

had been lunching together after a morning at the British Consulate. And we discussed eagerly what would be the most thrilling moment of our journey. Herron had read up on all its details.

“Do you suppose,” he said, “it will be when we get the first glimpse of Nanga Parbat? Did you know that you see it first from the top of the Pass above the Vale of Kashmir? over a hundred miles away. That will be wonderful, won’t it! . . . But perhaps it will be even more exciting, before that, when we’re going along quietly, in the train, across the flat hot plains, and suddenly we see in the distance the main range of the Himalayas.—Think of it! . . . The Himalayas! . . .”

I had long ago forgotten that conversation across a lunch table, in the rush and noises of a New York restaurant. Now I remembered again. And it was happening. Here we were, less than two months later, crossing the flat hot plain, and, suddenly, there they were—the mountains. . . .

### VIII

Jammu is the winter residence of the Maharajah of Kashmir.

It had been decided to take the two-day motor road from there to Srinagar, instead of the much more customary one-day trip from the British garrison town of Rawal Pindi, because we had heard that this early in the season some of the bridges on the Rawal Pindi route were likely still to be down after the spring freshets. This would have meant all sorts of trouble and delay, with our two tons of equipment. The result of this choice was that instead of arriving among the many fine hotels and modern European shops of a new barrack town, overrun with English soldiers and

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

civilians, we were pitchforked bodily into the smells, and inconveniences, and romance of a real little Oriental city.

Here in Jammu, most of us forgot for a while that we were an Expedition en route for Nanga Parbat. We became frankly travelers in India, just arrived for the first time from Europe and from the cosmopolitan great city of Bombay, and now suddenly dumped in the wilds of Kashmir. Our eyes, and ears, and noses were wide open to the amazing picturesque Eastern-ness of Jammu.

Merkl, Herron, and Wiessner, to be sure, had no time for such a frivolous attitude. They were preoccupied with seeing British members of the Kashmir Government, located here for the winter with the Maharajah and his court. There were vitally necessary government permissions to be arranged for.

But the rest of us, from the moment we left the station, began to enjoy the pageant of Jammu. Its narrow streets, winding between little rickety old houses with many balconies, were full of Oriental crowds—that is, of people moving always slowly, and with a carriage of graceful dignity. There were draped women, and men turbaned, bearded, and half naked, lively little brown boys, and little girls with wide black eyes and saris arranged like their mothers'. Many of them were rather dirty, all amazingly picturesque. They stared at the sight of Europeans, with the same detached interest with which we stared at them.

"Of course," we had been told in Bombay, "there's no place to stay at in Jammu but a dak bungalow, and a poor one at that." The dak bungalow had high ceilinged, shabby rooms with walls of an ugly dark salmon-colored plaster, and mostly "palangs," the native wooden bedsteads, to sleep on; a turbaned native in charge, with a beard dyed bright red, and possessing apparently little English

## *On the Way*

---

besides "tiffin" and "soda"; and a large live lizard running cheerfully around the tin tub and handsome copper basin of one of the bathrooms. Lizards are useful in bathrooms, we learned later. They catch flies.

### ix

Outside, as the day drew toward sunset, the crowds in the streets were thickening. The many strange cone-shaped towers of the Hindu temple-quarter rose against the western sky.

Inside the great temple enclosure, it was quieter and cleaner: a few men walking reverently across white marble pavements, on which turbaned Hindus sat cross-legged, among little bunches of flowers, for sale as temple offerings. Doorways with pointed Eastern arches opened all around, into inner courts, or buildings—holy places, as indicated by the rows of slippers on their thresholds, for one must tread sacred ground barefoot.

Later, in the black tropic evening, the tiny booths on both sides of the busier streets, wide open to the front, and lighted by flickering lights, were like stages—a succession of little tableaus of the East. Three bearded turbaned figures, cross-legged around a big wooden bowl of rice. Next, a booth hung with pointed slippers and sandals, and a shoemaker crouched at work. An empty booth, gleaming from floor to ceiling with brass and copper kettles. Then, a cluster of tall draped men standing talking and buying, in front of a sweetmeat seller and his piles of flat, thin, crisp-looking cakes, sticky with syrups. Stretching down both sides of the dark cobbled lane, with its shadowy passing figures, rows and rows of little lighted booths, and for each its own grouping and drama.

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

Late in the night, as in the heat we tossed restlessly on the dak bungalow balcony, there sounded the faint far-away echo of bells. Nearer they came ringing, and nearer, and passed by on the road below. A line of tall humped ungainly silhouettes, led by turbaned shadows, swaying along under the stars—a camel caravan on its way to the Khyber, or Beluchistan.

### x

But we were on an Expedition, after all. In the midst of other interests, motor cars and lorries were engaged, with the proper touch of bargaining; and the next morning we started on the two-day trip, through a wilderness of minor ranges, to Srinagar.

The road ran on, in wide-flung loops, over the valleys and the mountains. Exotic wastes of red sand, deep-channeled by rivers, under blue-black clouds. Hilly grazing country, rising to mountain heights, and an ascent into forests of glorious straight-trunked evergreens of unknown species. A pine-scented night at a dak bungalow, half reminiscent of a Swiss chalet, and a start at dawn, to go down again, into deep arid gorges. Then the bazaars of a dirty little village, and beyond it a long winding climb back and forth, back and forth, up the bare grassy side of a full-sized mountain. The air gradually getting cooler and thinner, occasional very early spring flowers, and patches of old snow. At almost the top of the mountain, (9,000 feet) a short tunnel.

We emerged the other side of the tunnel. The flat green plain of the Vale of Kashmir lay far below us, with a mountain barrier just beyond, and occasional distant glimpses of snowy giants, the main range of the Himalayas.

## *On the Way*

---

### **xi**

We turned a shoulder, and straight ahead on the horizon rose a snow mountain, very small and far away, but still dominating all the rest. Almost cathedral shape it set, high, and white, and solid, against the sky—on the left the long nave of the building, and on the right, instead of terminal towers, a sharp pyramid.

“Nanga Parbat,” said the driver.

We all looked at it.

“Very steep,” said Kunigk.

“That summit pyramid looks rather interesting,” I observed.

Aschenbrenner gazed at it silently a long time. Then he spoke in his broken English.

“On the top—of Nanga Parbat—is—nobody!”

---

## *Chapter IV*

### SRINAGAR

#### I

**S**RINAGAR was for us just the background of final preparations for the Expedition. There was no time here for picturesque strolling in the starlight, and savoring of Oriental flavors. Our walks, through the more moderate heat of an altitude of five thousand feet, were as straight and fast and businesslike as we could make them, hurrying along the Bund in the European Quarter, elbowing away on both sides the crowds that came pressing up against us.

“Shikara? (boat), sahib, memsahib?” “Tonga? (carriage), sahib, memsahib?”

And in a day or two when our business was known, “Sahib, memsahib, take me Nanga Parbat! Good cook, Nanga Parbat!” “Good bearer, (personal servant), Nanga Parbat!” “Good shikarri, (hunter), Nanga Parbat! See, good chitti!” and brown hands would thrust letters of reference in front of us. “See, good chitti, sahib, memsahib! Take me Nanga Parbat!”

We were told that the depression had reached even to Srinagar: that for the last year or two there had not been the customary number of English at this favorite summer retreat, so that unemployment was rife; and that these ravening hordes that assailed us on all sides, every time we appeared, so thick that we could hardly make progress

## *Srinagar*

---

through them, were only a little worse for us than for the average tourist. We had been warned not to pay attention to chitti, no matter how good or numerous, as they might be borrowed or stolen, but to do all our business and engage all our people through some reputable agency.

### II

Our first act on arrival was to drive to an agency and hire two houseboats, to live in during our stay. There is a large and thoroughly comfortable hotel in Srinagar, full of British officers and dinner clothes. But most of the British summer population prefer to live on the lovely lakes, and canals, and rivers, in houseboats. One and a half to two rupees a person a day,—depression prices,—(a rupee being about thirty cents), completely furnished except towels and bedding, with servants and food included.

We voted for houseboats. Not moored, however, romantically under drooping willow trees, on some little canal on the edge of the country, or on a lotus-covered lagoon beside a lake mirroring the mountains, an hour out of town. We were there on business, and we must be in the midst of things—against the shore of the big dirty Jhelum River that bisects the city, just opposite the European Banks and shops of the Bund.

This gave a fine chance for the enterprising unemployed. We would meet them at all hours of the day and night, pushing into the living room, waving chitti in their hands. "Sahib, memsahib, good cook, Nanga Parbat!"

They, along with the itinerant merchants with samples of their wares—shawls, or brass work, or papier-mâché boxes—would come in small boats floating up to our dining-room windows, as we sat eating. We never knew whether, turn-

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

ing our heads windowward, we might find just outside the screen, almost against our noses, a dark hand holding a large vase, or a string of beads, or a sheaf of chitti.

“Sahib, memsahib!” earnest beseeching voices rang continually in our ears.

I think it would be easy for a European to develop a persecution mania, among the Kashmiri of Srinagar....

But in spite of their accessibility to the multitude, the houseboats proved to be really charming toys. They are all of about the same architecture. One enters at the stern, from a tiny porch, into a little living room the width of the boat, with chairs, and generally a sofa with plenty of bright cotton-covered pillows. Then the dining-room, and two or three little bedrooms running up to the bow. The cooking is done in the “kitchen-boat,” where also the servants live, with their wives and bright-eyed children,—a big boat, roofed and walled with straw matting, and moored at one’s bow—always with as long a rope as possible, because of cooking smells. A double plank goes all the way around the houseboat, for the servants’ thoroughfare,—and also apparently their early morning promenade, for one is waked soon after dawn by the boat creaking and swaying, as they pass round and round it, outside one’s windows. The roof is flat, with inviting wicker chairs under a striped awning.

Our two boats were moored side by side, and we stepped from one to the other, either through the windows or from roof to roof. Charming toys they were.

“It’s like living all the time in a child’s playhouse,” said Herron, appreciatively. “You say, ‘Let’s pretend this is the dining room’ or ‘let’s pretend we are really sleeping here!’” We regretted that we did not have time properly to play in them.

### III

Still, they made a pleasingly frivolous background for the serious business of the Expedition. The tables in the little living room were covered with samples of grain—dahl, and atta, and all sorts of rice—with maps and lists, with porters' footgear, chaplis and two-toed socks. Tailors came, and shoemakers, and spread out their wares and samples along the sofa, among the bright little pillows; offered us puttoo-cloth, sheepskin-lined coats, and fur caps; and measured us for pointed nailed sandals, or high quilted-felt Gilgit boots.

Servants sent by the Agency squatted on the floor, while we looked over their chitti. There, with an interpreter, came Abdul Bhat, who was to have charge of all our servants, that famous old shikarri, with his wrinkled sagacious face and red-dyed beard. He assured us, that, if we put ourselves entirely in his hands, *he* would get us to the top of Nanga Parbat.—Little did we suspect the part he would play later.

And there in the evening we sat and discussed the problems and complications that had developed during the day.

### IV

Social life was not entirely neglected; and we would have been even gayer if we had had the time to accept all the invitations of the friendly English. Even as it was, luncheons, teas, and cocktails were crowded in among the business.

And one evening we entertained. Fresh flowers on the table, and pleasant conversation in the little living room afterward. Our guests were Lieutenant Burn, with Mrs.

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

Burn, and a friend of hers. As a survey officer, he knew well the natives and the district where we were going; and since he was also a very keen climber, we hoped that he might join our Expedition. He would have been an invaluable man to have. But Mrs. Burn was, naturally enough, reluctant to have him leave her and go into danger, and they finally decided against giving up their plans for a casual happy summer.

It was a jolly evening that we had together. At last, as hosts and hostess, we from our little porch watched them safely over the plank to shore. We turned back into the living room. In a flash every restraint of company manners in a foreign language vanished; some one seized a pillow, and the evening's festivities wound up with a usual evening diversion, a riotous pillow fight.

We had another good time, at the Burns' houseboat—Herron, Wiessner, the Doctor, and I—on a sunny afternoon,—laughter and fooling, and bathing in the lake. A pleasant day to remember.

When we returned to Srinagar that autumn, we heard that in August Lieutenant Burn and a friend, climbing in the near-by mountains, had been caught in an avalanche and instantly killed.

### v

Several days went by; and the time seemed even longer, each day was so full of many different things.

In the division of labor, we again had our respective duties. Aschenbrenner, Bechtold, Simon, and the Doctor worked long hot hours, in the godown where our provisions and equipment were stored, repacking boxes from Europe and new purchases made in Srinagar. Everything

## Srinagar

---

was being arranged to be handled in the most efficient possible manner, on the way in to the mountain.

My part was to visit the Superintendent of Posts and other officials, and arrange about my press cables, and our mail and telegrams. I also helped Herron with the correspondence in English; and of that there was plenty—official, business, and social. Our typewriters pounded long hours.

Mine, too, was the discovery of some of the domestic problems of houseboat life, serious problems, for health is absolutely vital for climbing expeditions. And our servants *would* fill the great earthen jars that replenished our bathroom pitchers, with water dipped up from the river, water coffee-brown with silt, and full of infinite pollutions. It was also darkly suspected that they even used the river water for dish washing. I enforced permanganate of potash, and with my own eyes watched our dishes vanish into bright purple depths.

Meanwhile Merkl, Herron, and Wiessner were looking after the general organization of the Expedition. There was still much buying to be done. Wiessner also made most of the arrangements with our Agency about the hiring of pony-transport and servants, for the next stage. Merkl and Herron busied themselves especially with important financial arrangements with our Bank, and with that most vital matter of all, visits to official dignitaries, and other procedure advised to make more likely the granting of Government permission to approach Nanga Parbat.

## VI

Always, in the midst of our other preparations and other activities, we were awaiting anxiously the necessary official permission to enter the Chilas district.

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

Thanks to Mummery's explorations, we planned to attack Nanga Parbat from the north. This meant that we must go into the Chilas district, a country of excitable natives, formerly one of the worst border regions, and only in the last twenty or thirty years completely pacified; also a poor, barren country, raising scarcely enough produce for its own inhabitants. Special permission is required to enter this region, where traveling Europeans would use up necessary food, and their outland coolies might start unfortunate fights.

Owing to complications and misunderstandings in Munich, we had not, as we would naturally have done, received this permission before we started. There had always been a little growing uneasiness, as we traveled nearer and nearer our goal, without being sure that we would be allowed to approach it in the end. But "Of course, it's just a formality," we had reassured one another.

Then one noon Merkl and Herron were summoned to receive the Government's decision. They returned and reported. We were refused the permission. We might approach Nanga Parbat only from the south side.

This was about the same as saying that we might not climb Nanga Parbat at all. Even Mummery, who would attempt almost anything, had pronounced the southern precipices of the mountain impossible.

It was a tense sort of luncheon. No one ate a great deal. Like whistling to keep the courage up, quick talk went back and forth: how we would apply again, how we would explain the impossibility of the south,—and surely, when the Government understood, all would be well. There seemed to be a certain undercurrent of feeling at the table, that if everybody said this same thing, often enough, and long enough, somehow it would become true. But nobody

## Srinagar

---

managed, even at that, to say it with a great deal of conviction: our brave hopes were affirmed with feeble voices.

After luncheon, our photograph of the south face of Nanga Parbat was found and looked over minutely. At most points, that side was quite obviously unclimbable. But there was a ridge on the right, apparently leading to Rakiot Peak, which Herron and Bechtold seemed to feel might possibly go.

"See, there are no deep shadows there, which would mean bad breaks," they cheered each other. "It looks steep enough, but not absolutely perpendicular." The others came to study the picture, leaning over one another's shoulders, silent and intent. Well, perhaps. Certainly they would try. . . . But, all the time, everybody knew.

Merkl and Herron were off to consult all our official friends. Herron had the idea of a memorandum to present to the Government, and prepared it with businesslike exactness. It stated briefly, point by point, our plans, purposes, and desires, and assured the Government that if allowed to enter that territory, we would not require food to be furnished by the region, but would take supplies for ourselves and rations for our coolies with us, and would also keep high along the shoulders of the Nanga Parbat massif, not going, to act as a disturbing influence, far down into the valleys that open into the Indus, where the Chilas villages are. Armed with this memorandum, Merkl and Herron made their official visits.

We continued our preparations, just as if nothing were the matter. And waited. The next day or two were not entirely good days. The surface of life went on, unchanged. There was still plenty of business to attend to, and occasional little moments of pleasure sandwiched in between. And some things seem too disastrous to be possible. It *must*

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

be that when they understood, they would grant us the desired permission. So we worked on, and tried not to think about it. Yet they were not entirely good days.

Then the permission came!

Of course we had known all along that they would grant it, we assured one another matter-of-factly. But somehow dinner that night managed to be an unusually hilarious meal.

### VII

Our Expedition business was going forward in surroundings full of warm color. Forgotten and ignored though it might be, around us was still Srinagar. And it was not completely forgotten and ignored. Even among our pre-occupations, we could still enjoy its local customs, still feel its exotic charm. Our routine preparations took on a vivid life, against the background of that incredibly romantic city.

We went to business appointments, along the wide, tree-shaded streets of the European Quarter, in jolting tongas, two-wheeled, with the seat for passengers facing backward—swaying, precariously exciting. Or we followed the water-ways in shikaras—long, gondola-like boats, with the buoyant movement of gondolas, but even more picturesque. They are propelled with heart-shaped oars, by natives sitting in the stern, while the passengers recline full-length in Oriental luxury, among red and white embroidered cushions, under a high embroidered canopy fringed with bright-colored beads.

I know of nothing anywhere so luxuriously restful as a shikara. Even in the midst of the strained tenseness of rushing here and there, with lists of thousands of things pressing to be done, it was impossible to feel hurried and



" . . . OUR LONG SHADOWS LAY BESIDE US"



## Srinagar

---

strained in a shikara. Just to step into one, was to step out of the world, into a region of timeless ease. Sinking relaxed into those luxurious cushions, advancing in buoyant state, to the slow rhythmic push of the rowers, the occasional light tinkling of the beads of the canopy, and the ripple of water moving past, one became an Eastern potentate, with a lordly disregard of the passing hours; one became a lotus-eater, floating along a river of dreams.—Till the interlude was ended, and one must step ashore again.

There were also for us one or two snatched moments of frank sight-seeing, when we went down the Jhelum River to the native city, and watched the life of the Kashmiri go by like a panorama, as we drifted in our shikaras. The river boats passed us, the dark, half-naked men bending to the sweeps, the cargo of women and children crouched among their rugs and pots,—gypsy-faced, fiercer and darker than the people of the Indian plains, with coins on their headdresses, rows of bracelets, and heavy, jangling earrings. We glided by houses with windows hidden by openwork wooden screens, and balconies of elaborate wood-carving, over which leaned women in such colors as made one catch one's breath: sharp turquoise blue, rich, bright rose, clear green, startling as a flame.

The Expedition was entertained for tea by one of the leading merchants in his 'shop,' in the rug room; a real Oriental tea, the guests seated crosslegged on cushions, around a cloth spread on the rug-covered floor—Thibetan tea with cinnamon, blanched almonds, and crisp, seeded, wafer-like Kashmir cakes. And afterward he showed us a collection of rugs that was like a collection of jewels, so that we went away in a dazed dream, of color, and pattern, and sheen. Rugs from kings' palaces, rugs from the past

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

centuries, priceless rugs, collected all over the East—a Mohammedan rug, apple green and pale gold, lustrous as satin, another sixteenth century one from Persia, changeable pale rose and ethereal blue. Intricate, exquisite designs—formal, curved patterns of sweeping lines, or a finely interwoven framework of conventionalized trees with birds and flowers.

### VIII

One evening I sat alone on the houseboat roof, and watched the moon on the water. The river was pale silver in the bath of moonlight, sluggish black in the shadows, the trees of the farther shore a band of deeper blackness against the sky. The sound of singing came to me from the distance; and slowly there stole along, close in the shadow of the other shore, a shikara filled with natives. Its lanterns were reflected golden, in the smooth water. Its long, dark outline and the swaying black figures of the rowers drifted across a space of clear moonlight, then, but for the yellow lanterns, were merged again in the shadows. The Kashmiri singing came as a soft minor throbbing, like the pulsing of the blood. The reflection of the lanterns moved on, down the black river. Again there was silence, and the lonely moon . . .

It is always strange when a thing turns out to be what one has heard it was, what one has dreamed and imagined, but never quite dared hope in reality to find. Stock phrases are familiar to one from childhood, “the mysterious East,” “the heart of the East.”—There, in that beating of weird, minor music, like something deep within, stirring in me new rhythms and primitive emotions, in that strange passing of flickering, jeweled lights and turbaned singing shadows—there, for me, was the East.

Another night, the last night we were to be in Srinagar. This time we floated in the middle of the Jhelum, in our own shikara. The air was warm and heavy, the evening tropically black, the moon hung yellow and dull and hot-looking just above the trees of the opposite bank. With us were Colonel and Mrs. Johnson, old summer residents of the city. As correspondent of the *Statesman* of Calcutta, the great newspaper of India, Colonel Johnson had been a most helpful friend. We talked, as we drifted, of the summer life of Srinagar: of the Maharajah's yearly progress down the river in his golden barge, of the comic dog show held by the British in the Residency grounds, or of the best places to buy really fine papier-mâché, and rugs, and shawls.

Large chunks of something began to pass us, floating slowly by on the black water. They looked like pieces of dirty foam.

"Feel it," said Mrs. Johnson, as they came thicker. We put our hands into a piece of the foam. It was soft, and very cold. "That's some of the winter snow," she said, "coming down from the mountains."

---

*Chapter V*

## INTO THE HIMALAYAS

## I

BANDIPUR was the name of our “jumping-off place” for the mountains. I had looked it up in an atlas in America,—on Wular Lake, thirty-five miles down the Jhelum River from Srinagar.

The day before, all our provisions and equipment had been taken from our godown and loaded into dongas, the big, flat-bottomed boats of the natives, and had floated through the night down the river to Bandipur. By now we had about eight tons to take with us. This was, however, much less than is carried by many expeditions; as such trips go, we were traveling light. For we were taking none of the luxuries of camp life, beds and chairs, phonograph and wireless.—What we had seemed enough, however.—A little army of pack ponies, a hundred and four of them, had been collected, and were awaiting us at Bandipur, to carry the loads nine days north to Astor, over the Himalayas. We had also about two hundred pounds of money, in little new leather bags—silver and small coins, to pay coolies with. These bags of rupees were as a safety measure to be carried by porters with always a climber to keep an eye on them.

We went to Bandipur by motor car, over an amazing precarious road. Major Irwin and Major Hadow, two friendly Himalayan Club members, helped us to get off.

## *Into the Himalayas*

---

Our last taste of civilized pleasures, for many months to come, was our sitting in wicker chairs with cretonne cushions, eating strawberries, in the garden of Major Irwin's little summer bungalow just beyond Bandipur.

As the ponies were loaded, and the caravan began to move over the first bridge, Herron, Wiessner, and Kunigk stood at its entrance, and counted the pack animals, one by one. Finally the tale was complete. Some of us mounted our riding horses, and the walkers shouldered their packs. The climbers, with five horses for eight, were to take turns walking, to help get themselves in training.

It was about noon on May 23rd that we set out, along a road that led us across the hot dusty plain, then turned to climb in switchbacks up the mountainsides, toward the 11,000 foot Tragbal Pass.

Now we were on our way to Astor, and beyond, traveling on the main caravan route from India to Central Asia.

### II

As we started on this nine or ten day trek to Astor, the thought of the Burzil Pass was uppermost in our minds. By the Burzil, 13,775 feet high, or about the height of the summit of the Jungfrau, and still deep in winter snow, we must get over the main range of the Himalayas, that rose between us and our northern mountain. We knew that although the twelve miles of snow could be passed on foot, no pony caravan had been that way this year. In fact, it is practically never crossed with horses before June 1st, at the very earliest, while we were now just entering the last week of May. If we should find it necessary there to transfer our loads to coolies, it would mean perhaps a week's delay in getting the coolies, as well as a great additional expense.

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

At Srinagar there had been much talk about the possibilities of the Burzil Pass.

At first, on the road, we discussed and hoped and wondered. The time and money involved made it a really vital question to us.

But in only a day or two, we had stopped thinking much about it. Our minds were put to sleep by the soporific effect of the routine of journeying, the drugged feeling of the steady traveler everywhere, the fascination of always going on,—like a wheel rolling on through the mountains,—arriving, sleeping, starting again, rolling off the miles, rolling on and on and on.

### III

We traveled.

Day by day, as we went toward the north, deeper into the wild mountain country, it was, in many ways, always about the same thing. Through ever-changing scenery, of course: sometimes over mountain passes, generally by deep narrow valleys; very occasionally in the shadows of pine forests, more often among the bare rocks and unfertile fields of a dry mountain region. But the ways of daily living did not change. Every rest house proved to be about like every other rest house, inside, however much they might vary in location and setting. Some were perhaps a little larger, or smaller; some cleaner, or less clean. But all were bare stone bungalows, with long verandas, and little dark sleeping rooms, that had small windows deep in their thick walls, fireplaces, and large “bath rooms” connected. The furnishings of each room were the same—an iron bedstead or two with wire springs, or the native palangs, of wooden frame and “springs” woven of strips of cloth, a table and

some wooden chairs, often a dull-colored shabby rug, and a few pegs on the wall.

Every night we would arrive, saddle-sore or foot-sore, and dusty, the chaukidar (caretaker) would let us in; and our servants would unroll our sleeping bags on our chosen beds, bring in our dunnage bags, and fetch us fresh washing water. My pony man would appear with my English saddle and bridle, and toss them into a corner. I would hang my riding whip, my long sheepskin-lined puttoo-cloth coat, and my khaki sun helmet on a peg above them—an attractive-looking ensemble they made. Setting one of my candles on the mantel ready for lighting, I would be settled for the night.

Then dinner would be prepared by our cook and his assistants over little fires in the kitchen quarters—with wood, chicken, eggs, and milk bought from the chaukidar, at fixed rates—and the meal would be served by our servants on tables pulled out on the veranda, or perhaps on the grass in front of the rest house, near a great pile of our gray Expedition bags and wooden boxes. These were all heaped every night on the veranda, or close to the house wall, for safety against theft, and a servant was supposed to sleep beside them. In the evening leisure after dinner, the men would smoke and sing and play practical jokes on one another.

And so to bed.

In the morning, breakfast, and our servants would roll up our sleeping bags again. There would be a great effect of hurry and bustle and shouting, while the pony men, really in perfect leisure, put the loads in tan-and-black striped saddle bags, and tied them to the ponies with black horsehair rope. The servants would bring up our saddle ponies; and we were off. Casual lunches would be eaten.

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

from our pockets by the roadside, or perhaps, on a very short march, we would reach a rest house in time for a belated meal.

So day after day, for five days, as we came nearer and nearer to our mountain, it was about the same thing.

### IV

This was, in a way, an interim time. We had worked. And we would work again. But now there was, in general, nothing we could do. Except to travel on. Wiessner was the one really occupied person. He had charge of the transport, walking or riding continually back and forth along the line, to notice a load loosening here, a group of ponies lagging badly there. All the horses belonged to individual owners, some men having two or three, some only one, and they all came along with their own animals. They proved to vary enormously, in the way they would get their ponies ahead, on a long day's march. These were the slowest little beasts with which I have ever come in contact; and it needed constant urging to keep them moving along at even a worm's pace of two miles an hour, and prevent them from actually going to sleep on their feet. All day Wiessner's energy helped push over the trail the long line of the caravan, that straggled out for miles. And almost every evening he instituted a check-over, to count the loads. Here he generally seemed to have the help of the indefatigable Aschenbrenner, though most of the men stood equally ready.

"A-1, A-2," up to "A—. P-1, . . . etc. K-1, . . . etc.," one would read from his black book, while the other checked.

Wiessner also directed the servants, those tall dark men—Almira, the sly, haughty, dandy, with his jaunty red fez

and his long staff of office, Aziza, slow and reliable, the stupid black-bearded —, all of our nine bearers and assistant bearers, down, or up, to the cook, with his hard face and his hookah. In this time of only very occasional and spasmodic work for most of us, Wiessner was continually busy.

There was also one more job, a dull one, at which the climbers took turns—watching the money bags.

“Where’s so-and-so?” some one would ask, as we gathered in a little group, having overtaken one another, riding, or swinging along briskly, well ahead of the main body of the pack ponies.

“Oh, he’s back with the coolies.” Four coolies carried the coin, trudging very slowly, with frequent stops to rest, from its great weight, lagging far behind even the pack animals; and always a bored climber plodded along with them, sitting as they sat, rising and following as they moved, keeping his eye on the money bags. Once in a while the count of coolies would be one short, when one had got temporarily mislaid. Then there would be all suitable excitement, and calling, and running back and forth, till he was located again.

Merkl and Herron once or twice must consult together and do some writing, at the rest houses, for mail still pursued us, a private mail bag of it, forwarded by special coolie through the kindness of the Superintendent of Posts at Srinagar. There were then letters to answer, and at the one telegraph office between Bandipur and Astor, messages must be sent about further transportation arrangements. But mail and telegrams came only once or twice.

In general, it was for us like being on a liner in mid-ocean, moving on and on, quite out of touch with the activities of the rest of the world.

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

### v

We had, however, plenty of fellow travelers on the way.

There were fierce-looking, black-mustached, turbaned Kashmiri, pressing up into the mountain district of Little Thibet to the eastward.

Once we met three miserable unshaven refugees, who had just struggled over the passes from Soviet Turkestan. Herron, talking with them in Russian, found they were really as half-starved as they looked, having fled their country because of the impossibility of getting enough to eat there, and having gone through great hardships crossing the wintry ranges into Kashmir.

For several days we passed and repassed, back and forth, the caravan of a large group of Mongols, returning to Yarkand in Turkestan, after a pilgrimage to Mecca. These strange primitive people had already ventured on the endless journey, across the Europeanized plains of India, over the purple Indian Ocean in western steamships, through the deserts of Arabia, to worship at that most sacred spot, the Ka aba where the black stone is held between earth and heaven, the center of the Mohammedan world. And now they were threading their long way back into the unimaginable countries behind the Himalayas, the far wastes of Central Asia. Their ancestors must have looked much the same, and lived in much the same way, in the days of Genghis Khan.

They were short squat men, with broad flat yellow faces, framed by pointed caps with fur earlaps, and they wore long quilted coats of dull faded reds—dark like a blood-stain, or terra cotta, or pinkish. Their women wrapped themselves modestly in scarlet draperies. They had big, fine-looking horses which they rode, not with saddles, but

## *Into the Himalayas*

---

widely astride great piles of furs, and skins, and embroidered cloths. They were mostly older people; their faces had wise wrinkles, and they looked at us with benignant interest. Night after night we would watch their tiny campfires, twinkling around our rest house in the dark.

### VI

Even here on the outskirts of the Empire, we had occasional glimpses of the power of the British. We overtook a lonely couple traveling on foot, an old man and a boy, in the dun wool clothes of the hillman. The old man had a long gray beard and a staff like a patriarch. Gnarled and sturdy, he was covering the ground at a good pace. On his back was a striped bag, marked with a crown and the letters "G.R." His Majesty's mail was being carried forward.

Again we encountered the imperturbable strength of Great Britain, that traditionally carries its conventions and its bathtubs into tropic jungles or on polar seas, in the shape of two English officers. They were as fresh, neat, and well-groomed as they might have been, on their way to tea in the club of some fashionable hill station—their sun helmets were set at the proper angle, their khaki shorts were spick-and-span. Their one concession to their surroundings was the native chaplis which they wore on their feet for tramping. They had been strolling around a few hundred miles of wild country, through the little-frequented Chitral region, as a pleasant casual excursion during their military leave. Already, only a few days out from Srinagar, we felt dusty and untidy beside them.

But this was nothing to our feelings when our caravan passed that of an English official on tour. Here was the whole might and prestige of the British Empire, moving

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

through a country whose native rulers for centuries have overawed their subjects by show and by appearances. One had not realized that any practical serviceable caravan could be also so impressive. No wonder it offered us a vivid contrast. Our servants, in their casual misfit dirty garments, looked worse than we had realized, beside these, who wore a neat dark sort of Oriental uniform, with turbans wound with mathematical precision and of a spotless whiteness equaled only in laundry advertisements. The servants' fine riding horses towered above our miserable rat-tailed little beasts. And even their pack mules stepped along proudly, as if in a fashion show illustrating "What the well-dressed pack-animal in the Himalayas will wear," namely—saddle bags, dark and uniform, and from head to tail a navy blue fly-net with yellow tassels. I have never felt really humble in front of a mule, before. . . .

And yet not completely crushed, either. As those mules looked down their noses at me, there was still something in my spirit of that swagger with which one, tired and dirty, with knickers, and nailed boots, and ice-axe under arm, tramps into a mountain hotel through the afternoon-tea fashion parade.

This caravan was traveling soft, surrounded by all comforts and elegancies. It represented the pomp and circumstance of officialdom, the bringing of European civilization to the wilds. *We* were playing a far more amusing game. We were "roughing it," becoming a part of the wilds ourselves.

### VII

So we traveled. Day by day, it was more or less the same. And yet always we were plunging deeper into the heart of the mountain country.

## *Into the Himalayas*

---

On the first afternoon we had left the Kashmir plain. Hot and dusty in the glaring afternoon sun, it lay beneath us, as we zigzagged up the mountain side under the pine trees. Our first night just below the Tragbal Pass, we breathed already the cool freshness of mountain air. We sat at dinner on close-cropped green grass among magnificent trees, and in front of us the mountain dropped down suddenly out of sight, so that through the golden sunset haze we looked across Wular Lake, five thousand feet below, to the long snowy range of the Pir Panjal, that walls the opposite side of the Vale of Kashmir. As we ate, the men laughed and joked, and afterward they sat contentedly silent, while dusk fell and the stars came out above the tall pines. Finally we were driven to shelter by a night chill that smelled of the snows,—delicious it seemed, after the muddy tropic dankness of night on the Jhelum River.

The next day we were reminded that this was not merely a picnic excursion. The Himalayas for a few moments showed their teeth at us. We crossed the 11,580 foot, still snow-covered Tragbal Pass, in the face of a driving blizzard.

The Tragbal gave us a very mild foretaste of the going we might expect to meet on the Burzil. There were two miles of snowy plateau to pass here, as against eleven on the Burzil. Ponies slipped and slithered, fell in the soft snow, and could not claw their way to their feet. When one fell, all the near-by pony men would rush up to help. Some would pull at his halter, others push the little beast from behind, others haul at his load. Sometimes it was necessary to unload completely, before he could be got up again. The single track followed by many other caravans was fairly solid, but let a pony's foot slip an inch from it, into the soft snow beside it, and he was stumbling and wallow-

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

ing to his knees. And the pack ponies were stupid about picking their way. My little saddle pony was cleverer. He would drop his nose down till it almost touched the path ahead, as if he were smelling out the route, and, moving very slowly and putting his feet deftly in just the proper places, would even on steep slopes get safely along.

But for the pack ponies, every hundred feet was a struggle. Slipping and kicking of horses, hauling and shouting of men; a long line of little dark slowly-moving objects, clustered into occasional seething groups, on the dull-white spring snow of the plateau, under a sky of overhanging gray and livid clouds. And in the midst of this, the clouds to the northwest turned darker, and swept down furiously upon us, and a biting wind drove in our faces a whirl of fine icy snow.

Snow—it was to be the *leit-motif* of our summer! We met it here, at the beginning, on the Tragbal, icy and wind-driven. We wallowed through its mushiness over the Burzil. Terrible in the roaring silver powder of avalanches, it threatened us first on the mountain; and later, turned deceptively gentle, warm and mild, it piled up and smoothed our hopes in its soft depths.

But now, it relented quickly. After about twenty minutes of icy bitterness, the blizzard drove over. We reached the next rest house with only two minor accidents. A struggling pony had kicked a man and cut his face, not too badly; and another pack animal had rolled fifty feet down the mountainside, and spoiled forever the smooth tinny beauty of the drums of zwieback which made up his load. The injured man howled lustily as the blood streamed from his cut, but quickly recovered in the excitement of watching me pour him out a drink of spirits of ammonia. The zwieback tins received no treatment.

VIII

From Gurais, on the third day, for a time the world turned grim. There we left Kunigk, half-conscious, with a high fever and symptoms of pneumonia. Dr. Hamberger stayed with him, and kept two or three of our Kashmiri servants to help care for the patient.—I offered, too, to remain, as an extra in case of emergencies, but it was not thought necessary.

We stepped into Kunigk's shadowy little room, one by one, to shake hands, and say good-by. He was charmingly polite, as always, but he was obviously a very sick man. His face was flushed with fever darker than his fair hair, and he could hardly pull himself together to speak. We rode off from those dreary stone buildings among the mountains, and left him. . . .

Kunigk had been a general favorite, quietly friendly with every one. Of course we must go on; and soon, we hoped, he would be well enough to join us again. But there was an atmosphere of tenseness about this departure.

From the beginning of the Expedition, however little acknowledged or sometimes even realized, there was always with us a consciousness of the seriousness of our purpose, a feeling running as an undercurrent to our casual day-by-day existence, that we were engaged in important matters, matters of life and death. On the large Himalayan climbing expeditions, there had generally been some loss of life. Never talked about, or even much thought about, it was a well recognized possibility, simply part of the normal hazards of the trade. If one went on such expeditions, what else could one expect? But now the chance of death seemed to be coming near, sooner than had been thought of. . . . Still, one had tried to be prepared for these things.

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

"We spoke of all possibilities," wrote Herron, in his private diary. "The best . . . the worst. X had died in three days, from pneumonia. . . . Useless to complain. It is for the mountains. . . ."

We rode on, and Herron spoke cheerfully. "If we take, say, six days more on the way, and spend three days in Astor," he calculated it out, "Kunigk may be able to catch up with us before we leave there."

### IX

Unloaded coolies with messages travel quickly back and forth. Already there was good news again, from Kunigk.

The way was steadily, though slowly, bringing us up. We were nearing the main range of the Himalayas. Left behind, the dusty valleys, the little mountain settlements, where oxen plowed the sun-baked fields. Left, the occasional groves of pine trees. We were in the upper valleys now, above tree line. Mountain torrents rushed down across our path. The peaks themselves were close above us. Their bare rocks looked not unattainable, just a little way up the steep grassy slopes. The first flowers, snowdrops and anemones, pricked up through the still-brown grass. Frequently our reluctant ponies must be urged across patches of winter ice.

Now in our nostrils, stronger and stronger, came the sharp smell of the snows: mingled still with the earth smells of early spring, of good wet mud and green things freshly growing; but dominating always more and more,—like a strong trumpet blare, thrilling through the blood, lifting, challenging in exultation, clear above the lesser notes of the symphony.

It swept up to a magnificent crescendo, there at Burzil



ON THE BURZIL

"Great holes were churned into bottomless softness"



"OUR DAYS AT ASTOR MAKING LAST PREPARATIONS PASSED PLEASANTLY . . ."

Herron, Merkl and Simon



## *Into the Himalayas*

---

Chauki, at the beginning of the Pass. The rest house, on the northern slopes, was almost surrounded by snowfields. Mountain streams roared by it, singing with their load of melted snow. The lower, southern side of the valley was a delicate tan, sprinkled with stunted willow bushes with their pink-flushed twigs; but ahead and around to the north, the slopes rose white—clean virgin white, everywhere, right up to the towering rock points of the peaks. All the mountains stood white, close around us, looking down, untouched by the first attack of spring creeping up from the lower valleys.

A golden sunset warmed the grass and willows to red and amber, but grew pale and laid hyacinth shadows on the austere snows. It faded to twilight, and foregrounds vanished, as darkness came; the ghostly mountains drew nearer and nearer; their proud black peaks touched the stars.

### x

Here was the Burzil Pass, and here were we—come together at last. Were we to attempt it with ponies? Our men had talked with other caravans all the way along the road, and had learned definitely that the snow was still deep, and that it had not yet been crossed this year, except on foot. But the pony men were ready to try it. Only, they said, we must travel as far as possible at night, before the snow softened in the sun.

At two o'clock, we stepped out of the candle-lit interior of the rest house, into cold, star-filled darkness. Here and there the little fires of the Mongol encampment were dying into embers. A lantern or so darted about. But mostly it was black-dark—shadows moving in blackness, voices, horses' hoofs shifting on frozen earth. The hundred and four pack

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

ponies were loaded, with low talk, and none of the customary shouting. It was as if the sublimity of the high peaks hushed the usual clamor.

We mounted the dim, shifting shadows of horses, and started through the dark. We must trust the ponies to pick their way, for we could see nothing. We moved among shadows, through a blackness that engulfed everything close around, and left visible only the vague, looming shapes of the mountains, and the blue-black sky, thick-sprinkled with tiny silver stars. By a slight paling of the blackness underneath, and by the different tread of the ponies, we could tell when they stepped from earth onto snow. We strained our eyes, and gradually made out, in the less deep dark of the snow, tiny, black, moving shapes, strung in a long line, up and up the steep slopes till they merged into the distant night. Our ponies climbed after them. We were among the peaks. It was like an Alpine ascent done on horseback: the same thin, cold air, the same stars, the same peaks waiting around, the same steep, crisp, hard-surfaced snow to climb on.

The rise grew steeper and steeper. We dismounted, and zigzagged slowly up, edging our boot nails into the incline. The ponies dug their toes into the hard surface, gathered their hindquarters up under them, and scrabbled. The pony men tugged at halters, the ponies clawed and clambered up. Suddenly the long line halted. We walkers trudged on, panting, and saw ahead a little struggling knot of shadows. At one of the steepest points, there was a patch of soft snow, and the ponies could not get their footing. Loads were taken off. There was pulling and pushing and hauling. Gradually the knot was untangled. The long, black line crawled slowly on again.

The moon rose. Spots of luminous whiteness shone

among the peaks, spread and spread, and stretched downward toward us, till all the snows were flooded with light, or marked with sharp black shadows. Now the slopes rose silver white as a dream, around us, and we moved in glory. The ponies plodded on, or pawed for footing on the steep pitches. Companionship by its black shadow under the moon, the interminable black line still wound slowly upward.

Gradually, almost unnoticed, the sky began to pale, and we shivered in the chill that comes just before the dawn. The nearer peaks lost their moonlit glamour, and turned gray and wan and forbidding. Suddenly our long, pale-blue shadows lay beside us on pale apricot snow, and the sun had risen.

Now the leading part of the line had reached the comparatively level plateau among the summits. The rest straggled far back, out of sight. Wiessner was omnipresent, watching the speed of those ahead, hurrying back to urge on the laggards. The other climbers wandered to and fro, from one part of the line to another, keeping a general eye on things and reporting progress.

As the sun rose higher, and the snow began to soften in its rays, the real struggle started. Soon the ponies were progressing slowly and laboriously, wading in a ditch to their knees. Then, on the occasional soft patches, they began to break through really deeply. The forelegs of one would drop in to the shoulder, he would heave himself back onto firmer snow, only to sink suddenly with a hind leg. He would gather his haunches under him, paw and struggle, while the pony man hauled at his halter. There were seldom any groups of helpful pony men now. Every one was kept too busy with his own beasts. Each horse passing would sink down deeper, till great holes were churned for several yards into bottomless softness. Going

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

round, to avoid one of these, a pony would make a new break through.

As the sun's heat grew greater, they often went in all four legs together. Here and there, all along the line, ponies were wallowing and floundering in powder snow, halfway up their bellies. Loads were off half the time. The ponies panted and trembled, the pony men grunted and sweated, and worked almost as hard as their charges. Most of the riders were walking. One climber had been off three times, in the pitching and heaving of his struggling mount. I snatched a lift on every occasional hundred feet of blessed hardness.

So the hours went on.—Six o'clock—seven o'clock—the line was stringing along more and more. Already we felt that a long day of effort had gone by, since we left Burzil Chauki. Eight o'clock—the line, with wide gaps between for laggards, was beginning to pass by the stone shelter, half-buried in snow, that marked the absolute summit of the pass, and to start down the shorter slopes of the other side. Nine o'clock—those of us on foot were getting well down now. Ten o'clock—we were down almost on the level, and could see far ahead the little stone rest house at Sirdar Chauki, the end of the pass. At half-past ten we met one or two patches of solid ground. And then, with one final pull across snow which, even for walkers, was slow and laborious going, we stepped at last on real terra firma, and dropped to rest on the good muddy turf, watching for the first of the ponies. But it was to be a long wait before the caravan began to come in sight.

The last snow was about the worst; and how relieved all the horses seemed, when after their final exhausted flounderings, they pulled themselves up out of the snow-morass onto that solid earth. It was after one o'clock, or

## *Into the Himalayas*

---

more than eleven hours from our start, when the last worn-out straggler came in.

The regular day's march over the Burzil would have brought us to Chillam, six miles farther on. But it was unanimously voted, by sahibs and pony men—and I am sure the ponies would have agreed if they could—to call it a day. As we settled in, a coolie arrived, bringing a telegram from the friendly Road Contractor at Gilgit. It read "Burzil Pass still impassable for ponies."

That afternoon the climbers celebrated, by doing a very delicate traverse along the side of the rest house, from the veranda to the corner.

### XI

The Mongols returning from their pilgrimage had followed our Expedition over the Burzil, and we wandered through their camp that night, just after sunset.

The sunset hush still lingered in the air, sweet with the juniper smoke of cooking fires. Two of the men of Yarkand stood on a little mound, silhouetted against a back-drop of distant pointed mountains, pale blue streaked with white, and a pale daffodil sky. They stood, their faces turned toward the west, toward the dark mountain wall, and far beyond, toward the sacred city of Mecca; and their arms were stretched out toward it. The outline of their peaked caps, their flat noses, their Mongolian beards, their lifted arms and long cloaks, was sharply dark, against that pale bright background down the valley to the north. The older, in a loud singing voice, chanted a prayer. He ended; they slowly knelt on the prayer rugs under their feet, and prostrated themselves, down to the ground, before the ruler of this majestic world, the One God, Allah. They rose, and again, with outstretched arms, prayed aloud. The

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

dark, tall, exotic dignity of their figures stood out against the far mountains and the gold sky to the north. A horse had strayed near and now made part of the group—the companion of the steppes, motionless, patient, waiting with drooped head. . . .

### xii

Next day the Expedition was on the way again, and arrived early at Chillam, usual rest house for the Burzil, after a short morning's march.

Every one, each in his own way, seemed thoroughly to enjoy the afternoon half holiday. The pony men disported themselves in dances and hopping contests, or sat cross-legged on the grass outside the kitchen quarters in the compound behind the rest house, braiding so-called "grass sandals," out of the straw rope which they carried always with them, to renew footgear when a pair wore out. The cook watched them from the kitchen veranda, peacefully smoking a hookah, or water pipe. The tired ponies cropped vigorously at the grass of the nearer hillsides, a little less scanty than that half-hidden by snow around Sirdar Chauki.

But Satan finds some mischief still. . . . The pony men had a new thought. They came to us with a request—would the sahibs give them extra-special additional bak-sheesh, for their hard work in getting over the Burzil Pass? And could it be distributed now, at once, so they could immediately enjoy the pleasure of their riches? We felt this request, however, was far from unreasonable under the circumstances, and actually gave them gladly every penny they asked, contrary though this was to the regular and expected Oriental custom of bargaining in money matters. Two annas was what they requested, or about four cents apiece!

We traveled on.

... We had crossed the mountain barrier, and were starting again downward. We began to have glimpses of the life of this region in the northern part of the Western Himalayas, this old country of the Dard people. We entered it now almost as tourists, seeing it and its inhabitants as picturesquely strange.

We looked with interest at the dark-faced hillmen we met on the road, with their heavy hand-woven wool cloaks and full trousers, gray or dun-color, their little round caps with rolled brims, their legs and feet wound round with strips of cloth. Very odd and foreign they looked to us then. Later, this dress, as worn by our hill coolies, was to become as familiar and commonplace to us as our own, in the close daily companionship of more than three months.

We were interested in the occasional little settlements, of round stone houses with clay roofs, huddled together in terraces, the half-naked brown children playing about, and the women whose dark eyes looked up at us with shy curiosity under odd tambourine-shaped black headdresses fringed with silver coins. Later, all this would come to represent to us the normal life of men—the life which we must leave behind when we turned to the desolate heights of Nanga Parbat, and which we would eventually come back to, seeing it as familiar and welcoming, after the barren snows.

We traveled on.... As we came round a bend of the path, there at the end of the narrow V-shaped valley, high

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

above the nearer mountains, rose walls and peaks of snow.

“Nanga Parbat?”

“Ha, Nanga Parbat!” said the nearest pony men. It seemed strange. It seemed hard to grasp. We felt the pony men must be mistaken. We had journeyed so long. We had missed, through cloudy weather, the hoped-for distant glimpse from the Tragbal. We had so long to travel still, to reach the mountain. This view had not been known of or expected. We had felt that the sight of Nanga Parbat would come, now, only as the end of our dreams, when we should at last draw near its base after long journeying. Almost, in preoccupation with nearer problems and excitements, we had forgotten “the mountain.”

So for a long time we questioned still. We asked other pony men. We studied our map, and argued whether it would really be possible to see it from that point. Then, as the road wound on, and as it still hung there in the sky, new peaks rising high and magnificent when others vanished, we realized that it must be true. There could be nothing else so great. We finally accepted. We stopped by the roadside and surveyed our mountain.

Nanga Parbat.... To each of us, according to temperament, the sight of it meant a somewhat different thing, but to all something strong, vitally important, and inexpressible. There were in none of us any words for the deep, confused, tumultuous flood of feelings with which we looked. But no words were needed. That name said everything. We repeated it over and over to ourselves, almost incredulous still, “Nanga Parbat! Nanga Parbat!”

---

## *Chapter VI*

### LAST PREPARATIONS

#### I

ARRIVED at Astor, we began to gather our forces for the attack. There, came the hiring of coolie load-carriers, preparatory to leaving the caravan route, and turning off into the wild little-known country north of Nanga Parbat.

At Astor also we were joined by Lieutenant R. N. D. Frier of the Gilgit Scouts, fluent in Urdu and hill dialects, detailed by the Political Agent at Gilgit, the British ruling power of that region, to help us all summer as transport officer. He was to prove absolutely invaluable to us, in his knowledge of native dialects and coolie ways and hill customs, and of all the "ropes" of traveling in a strange wild country, among primitive people with rigid traditions. None of the rest of us had ever even been in India before; and there is much to learn. And by his readiness to give up any of his comforts and subordinate any of his desires to the interests of the Expedition, he won and held the hearty admiration and gratitude of the whole group all summer.

#### II

He had at once something of a situation on his hands.

We had hired in Srinagar our nine personal servants, a cook, and a cook's assistant, also twenty or thirty Kashmiri

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

coolies, with the understanding that they were to stay with us for the whole Expedition. Abdul Bhat, the red-bearded old shikarri, had been put in charge of this group. Here at Astor, trouble began.

When the details of going on were being arranged, the servants were definitely given sacks of twenty-five to thirty-five pounds of their masters' belongings to carry. It had been explained to them in Srinagar, and repeated on the road, that as the sahibs on the way in to the mountain were to travel loaded, to get in training, they too would be expected to carry something. But no written contract had been drawn up. Now when it came to the point, they refused, saying that it was not the custom for servants to take anything at all. Only coolies carried loads, they explained scornfully. Old Abdul Bhat stood behind their refusal, and, gathering them together, with the Kashmiri coolies, under the trees outside the rest house, he made a dramatic speech, in which he showed by gesture just the way he would cut the throat of any one who should side with the sahibs, instead of upholding the natural rights of the Indian servant.

This was our first experience with native "bolshevism"—a term which seemed to be loosely used for any lack of submission to the white man's traditional authority. We were told that it is spreading through the hills. For example, formerly any native seeing a white man approach on the road, would leap from his horse, and wait dismounted, as a sign of respect, while the sahib passed. Now, it was pointed out to us, many of the young men no longer do this, but ride brazenly by, like equals.

For us, the Astor strike proved to be only the first of such troubles. During the summer, similar things were to recur so often that we came to take them almost as a

## *Last Preparations*

---

matter of wearisome routine. Though in higher altitudes and in more critical situations we would desperately time after time struggle against them—sometimes successfully, sometimes with fatal lack of success.

This first taste, however, was something new and dramatic—almost pleasingly exciting. These servants and coolies were not absolutely necessary to us. It was rather disconcerting to think of getting on without them; for we had become used to the servants, and had counted on the coolies as a nucleus for the work on Nanga Parbat. But they were not necessary. Already Lieutenant Frier was arranging with the Nahim Tesseldar, the native official of Astor, to collect an army of load-carriers, from all the surrounding hill settlements, to take our goods to the base camp. For the mountain work, the Political Agent had obtained for us, through the mayor of Hunza, volunteers from that mountainous district to the north. They are known as a hardy, spirited people, used to living between five and fifteen thousand feet, and those British familiar with Kashmir had agreed that they should develop into very fine high-altitude porters.

So our Kashmiri were not necessary; and trying to keep the best of them developed with some of us into almost a game. We plotted to isolate the more amenable, and exercised our powers of persuasion on them, one by one. A few seemed really reluctant to leave us. But even these would-be strike-breakers were terrified by the threats of Abdul Bhat, and of their fellows. He had them all well in hand; and finally they received their pay and marched off en masse.

The affair did not end without further annoyance, of a humorous kind, since they rode back to Srinagar, on the horses we had furnished them, to represent us as perse-

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

cuters of the innocent, Simon Legrees of the worst sort, and to demand that we pay them their wages for the rest of the summer. Well, we had heard that couplet already many times in Srinagar:

“If you gave a Kashmiri Earth, Heaven, and Hell,  
He’d ask for another five annas, as well.”

### III

One man, however, remained, a cheerful black-faced giant of a coolie, Ramana by name. Already he had been noticeable on the way, always springing forward to pull or haul, whenever help was needed. Now when all the others deserted, he stepped forth, promoting himself cheerfully.

“*Ramana Cook*,” he announced, grinning and tapping his broad chest proudly with a stubby black forefinger: “*Ramana Nanga Parbat Cook*.” So Ramana cooked for us at Astor, until a more experienced professional could be found. And he was chosen to go forward with the advance scouting party, to explore the route to the mountain; thus coming daily nearer to the literally, as well as figuratively, lofty position he later won as “*Nanga Parbat Cook*.”

### IV

Our five days at Astor, making all the last preparations and arrangements, passed pleasantly enough. The air was warm and gentle, the green grass and rustling poplar trees around the rest house were grateful, after the dry barren valleys on the way. The men would wander over to the village bazaar to make purchases, or stroll about the near-by mountainsides.

## *Last Preparations*

---

On the third day we joyfully welcomed Kunigk, arriving with the doctor, having made a miraculously quick recovery from his illness.

And one afternoon the Rajah of Astor held a polo match in our honor. We were glad of a chance to see polo played in this region, which some authorities believe is its original home. Here every tiny hill village where there is a flat place large enough has for centuries had its polo ground, and it was perhaps from this little mountain district that the game was carried over all the rest of India, and later, of the world.

As guests of honor, we were seated in wooden chairs on a rug-covered platform beside the polo field. First there was music on native instruments, then the players appeared. Like most upper class natives, they wore, except for their hill caps, regular European clothes, shirts and riding breeches. They played a wilder, rougher game, with fewer rules, than the conventionalized British polo of the plains—very fast and dashing to watch. Their little hill ponies swept up and down the field in clouds of gray dust, the bright native blankets under their saddles showing darts of color as they swooped and whirled.

When the breathless contest was over, the native musicians pounded their drum and drew wailing music from their strange stringed instrument, and two men postured before us in a slow dance.

## v

Aschenbrenner and Bechtold had been chosen as scouts, to find a way for the Expedition over the northern ridges, to the base of Nanga Parbat. They started, with three coolies and Ramana, two days before the rest of us.

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

They had a real problem in front of them. They were plunging into territory almost unvisited by Europeans, with a new government map and the slight local knowledge of their porters as their only guides. Their route must be possible for heavily loaded coolies, without footgear for extensive snow. Yet they must keep high around the shoulders and spurs of the massif, avoiding the inhabited lower ends of the nullahs as they run north into the valley of the Indus; for such had been our promise to the Government at Srinagar.

They must also be continually watching for possible routes up the mountain; for theirs was the responsibility to determine from the head of which nullah we had best launch our attack.

### VI

We packed our goods on ponies for one more march to Doyan, and again our long line filed out of the rest house compound. Here, we turned our backs for the summer on civilization—as represented by a telegraph office, and an English-speaking Kashmiri Postmaster. At Doyan that night, our pony travel on the caravan route was ended. Our last contact with the ordinary life and business of men was broken. We set up our tents on the mountainside an hour above the village, to await the arrival of the coolies.

Our forces for the siege were assembling. The wilderness and the mountain lay ahead.

---

*Chapter VII***THE MOUNTAIN IMMANENT****I**

**N**OW we had entered the outlying borders of the country ruled by Nanga Parbat. This first camp of the Expedition was actually on the side of a long spur running far down, starfish-fashion, from the higher central peaks of the mountain. As soon as our coolies should come, we could start forward. Already we were tense as hunting dogs held on the leash, straining for a first sight of the quarry.

**II**

But we were not only eager and purposeful mountaineers. Happy with our favorable progress, we felt somewhat like a picnic party, too, just in a mood to be delighted with this Himalayan camping, all its little luxuries and amusing inconveniences, which were to be our daily life for the rest of the summer.

This, our first camp, was pitched in one of those beautiful spots that were to make memorable our march over the ridges of the Nanga Parbat massif. We were in the famous Mushkin Forest. On the long hot route among barren mountains, which stretches from Srinagar to Doyan, and beyond to distant Kashgar, the traveler always enters gratefully that green oasis of shadowy coolness. Tremendous pines rose above us, sifting the sunlight over our tents, and

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

the little open meadow among them, where we ate, and sat by our nightly bonfire, was soft greensward, patched here and there with the deep blue of violets. Through the trees, as the hillside dropped below us, we had a far-distant view of a range of fine snow peaks. Floating unbelievably high, beyond and above the rest, its white points and ridges looking like a mirage, or like something drawn in chalk on the upper sky, rose Rakaposhi in the Karakorum.

We thoroughly enjoyed everything about this camp.

We liked the evening bonfire to sit around, and eat and talk and sing. We discovered the real use for our two sizes of zwieback tins, here first set on end as dining-room furniture. We appreciated the picturesque background note given by the natives of nearby villages, who poured in to consult the European doctor, and clustered about him under the trees with Lieutenant Frier as interpreter, while the rest of us were busy in the sunny meadow, shifting the contents of our boxes into bags, weighing and labeling them for coolie transport.

We were especially pleased with our charming little khaki-colored tents, now set luxuriously on a springy cushion of pine needles. They were wall tents, most of them, with bamboo end-poles and ridge-poles, and rubber floors. They were anywhere from four to five feet high, so that one could enter stooping or kneeling, six to seven long, big enough pleasantly to lie down in, and five to six wide, so that the floor space just accommodated two sleeping bags side by side. In rain and in snow, they were to prove always warm and waterproof. We found them easy to handle, and our coolies also deigned to approve of them, saying they had never seen sahibs' tents that could be put up so quickly. Altogether, we were to be very well satisfied with them, all summer.



"THE SCOUTS MIGHT BE IN SIGHT OF ITS SNOWS . . ."



## *The Mountain Immanent*

---

They had also many especially attractive features, which delighted the childish side of some of us. Perhaps the most fascinating to play with, was a little celluloid window in the back of some of them, that pulled open and shut in its frame, with an equally movable mosquito-netting screen inside, and, outside, a blind that rolled down and snapped. We examined all their interesting details, tied our respective national flags to the end guy ropes, and felt ourselves settled in our new homes.

Camping, like this, was going to be more than a practical necessity—it was wonderful fun.

### III

There were all sorts of jokes and fooling. One day there appeared on a tree a series of rules for proper behavior in camp, as commanded by the Lumbadar of Doyan. As to their source, we might be sure, for he had signed them himself, in good German writing. But as to their propriety—well, some were more proper than others. One of them stated firmly that dogs might not stray loose around camp, but must be kept on a lead. Our dog supply had now become so limited that this seemed aimed almost too pointedly at Lieutenant Frier's puppy.

From the beginning, we had had more or less to do with dogs on the Expedition. There was first Benjie, companion to Colonel and Mrs. Johnson of Srinagar, that big impulsive white bulldog, with kind, mischievous eyes. He was a friend to all the world. His moist pink tongue welcomed regularly all Expedition callers at his houseboat, and his great weight almost knocked us down as he proved his affection.

After him Heda had flitted in and out of our lives—Heda, always on his appearances rapturously greeted as

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

“der Nanga Parbat Hund.” His name was invented by Herron, a transposition of Dahe. Heda first appeared to us at Peshwari, a day beyond Gurais,—a cringing, woolly, black and white creature, about the size of a small sheep dog, dirty and pathetic, but with charming eyes. He slunk around at a safe distance from the table while we were eating, and if any one made a sudden move he shrank and ran, tail between legs. Evidently he was used to all sorts of blows and missiles. We tossed him chicken bones, which he gnawed ravenously, and tried to coax him to take them from our hands. But he was too timid. Still he appeared at the next rest house.

“*Da kommt er! Der Nanga Parbat Hund! Heda, Heda! Komme hier, Heda!*” We held out tempting morsels, and he crept a little nearer. Herron, our greatest dog-lover, was the most patient and persistent in his wooing. Soon Heda was snatching bits of food from his hand. After a while he would come close, and allow himself to be patted, and scratched behind the ears. It was a proud moment when finally, at Astor, Herron sat on the ground with Heda acting like a real dog at last, being held and rubbed and towedled, while he sprawled contentedly across Herron’s lap.

At Astor Lieutenant Frier introduced his delightfully long-legged white hound-puppy from Persia—a dog of lofty lineage that, with silky curling hair and a languid patrician carriage. Except when he became madly puppyish, and ran long-legged races with himself, and tore around in circles while his ears whirled and flopped. Wahab, Lieutenant Frier’s bearer, was the valet of the aristocratic puppy, and carried him on the march, hung limply like a captive maiden over the saddlebow, ears swinging, and white legs and big puppyish feet dangling grotesquely down both sides.

## *The Mountain Immanent*

---

We never saw Heda again after Astor. Was he perhaps jealous of this new addition? The puppy, that delicate exquisite, was sent home to Gilgit when we finally left Doyan. We regretted Heda, parted reluctantly with the puppy, and sighed for a dog to alleviate the anticipated rigors of the base camp. But this too we would leave behind us, as we turned toward the mountain. There were to be no more dogs all summer.

### IV

At last the coolies were arriving at our camp above Doyan.

The army of them had been summoned from all the hill districts for several days' march around, places as far distant as Baltistan to the east, in Little Thibet, and Hunza in the northern mountains. We were even to have one recruit from the wild tribes of Yaghistan, westward beyond the Indus toward Afghanistan.

Now the main body was beginning to assemble, the Astori and the Balti. In small and large groups they appeared, drifting up the path through the shadows of the forest, slight men with small features, in heavy brownish-gray homespun—loose cloaks, and full Eastern trousers—with round gray caps with rolled rims, and long staffs in their hands. They gathered under a huge tree at the other side of our meadow, more and more of them, standing and squatting together, like a gray flood rising and spreading more widely over the grass. One hundred and twenty was the final count of the Astori, and forty Balti, who assembled in a separate group down the hillside. Their Jemadars (headmen) sought out Lieutenant Frier for report and discussion.

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

At dinner we heard the result of the discussion. The Astori had claimed that the loads were too heavy,—though they were actually only the fifty pounds agreed on with the Nahim Tesseldar at Astor. They refused to go with us.

Only later did we get to the bottom of this, and learn the real cause of this strike. Then the Astori confessed that their true motive had been fear. Nanga Parbat, the tremendous god-mountain, had always been an object of terror as much as of worship to the people in the regions around; and the loss of two coolies with Mummery in 1895 had never been forgotten, and had added greatly to its evil reputation. The Astori had understood that they were being sent to carry loads up Nanga Parbat. Like frightened horses they planted their feet, and no urging could make them budge.

We did not then know their reason, but we felt something behind their present attitude. Lieutenant Frier hoped, however, that fear of consequences for themselves would override their inexplicable obstinacy.

Meanwhile the forty Balti did not join them in refusal, but agreed to go forward, and to come back and get more loads, carrying them on by relays. We would have to get along somehow with the Balti only.

Late that night Bechtold appeared in camp, and reported the latest observations of the scouts. Of the mountain they could as yet see nothing; it was always hidden in clouds. But as far as they had gone they had found a way; goat tracks and herdsmen's paths could be linked into a usable coolie route over the next two ridges. Bechtold now stayed with us as guide, and Kunigk hurried ahead to join Aschenbrenner in further scouting.

We prepared to start next day, even though under difficulties.

## *The Mountain Immanent*

---

### v

There was good news, in the morning. The strike of the Astori was over. They were now ready to go on with us.

Up the steep path, rough with gnarled roots, through the sun-flecked shadow beneath the tremendous pines, an endless line of coolies began to climb. Their backs were bent under the great loads; only their legs showed below the piles of bags and boxes, as they vanished up through the forest. Slowly, one by one, they passed by my tent; and it seemed as if the Expedition was really beginning, at last; all those tons of goods were starting to move over the mountains.

On the pony trip, we had felt out of touch with the world. But this was going to be quite different. Now we were taking all our world with us. We were to be complete in ourselves—a microcosm traveling through the wilderness.

### VI

More and more consciously, every day, we were feeling ourselves in the shadow of the mountain. There was to be a long journey still in front of us, with uncertainty always ahead. For we realized that we might find very slow and difficult going. We were to move through new country, breaking a way over a succession of steep mountains, twelve to fourteen thousand feet in height, more or less wooded, more or less precipitously rocky.

Yet even now, we felt close above us the presence of Nanga Parbat. We had had glimpses and promises, since before Astor. While we had sat waiting in camp above Doyan, we had known that the scouts from some high crest might already be in sight of its snows, searching them with

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

glasses for routes to the virgin summit. Any day now a note might come: "Here we have hopes," or else, "From this point the summit appears impossible."

Always the mountain was with us, as, collecting our hundred and eighty coolies, and organizing our five to six tons of supplies, we prepared to march like a great army to the attack.

### VII

Ice-axes were unpacked and nailed boots greased, for we did not know what conditions we might meet, over the ridges. Group by group, as we got ready, we started on. I left after lunch, riding horseback as far as the next camp, almost at the top of this mountain. I was furnished, according to my diary, "with a strong and obstinate horse, and an old man to pull him."

We were here in a green and most beautiful country, a country of obvious wild loveliness, entirely different from the desolate fascination of the region through which we had passed on the caravan route. I rode by a picturesque little hillside settlement, a tumbledown house or two among deep lush meadows in the shelter of patriarchal trees. Shy, dark women looked at me, in my sun helmet, shirt and trousers, as curiously as I looked at them, in their draped homespun garments, hoodlike headgear, and big heavy earrings.

Later, the path brought me into a violet-blue meadow, with a sparkling stream, and occasional huge pine trees. Over its green lawns, darting through the sunlight and shadow, like a group of little decorative figures, little naked brown boys were scampering, playing and laughing together. Their heavy dun homespun clothing lay joyously discarded in piles by the brookside.

## *The Mountain Immanent*

---

Soon afterward my horse overtook Herron, climbing slowly under a loaded rucksack.

"That was a lovely thing, wasn't it!" he greeted me with quick enthusiasm. "Like a scene in ancient Greece, something out of Arcady!—The boys started to put on their clothes when they saw you coming in the distance," he added, laughing, "but I told them the memsahib wouldn't mind." I was glad of a picture to remember.

My horse climbed fast, through pine forests, through fields thick with spring flowers—violets, and gentians, and pink and yellow blossoms—through little groves of birches, misty with the opening buds of spring. I passed some of our loaded coolies, resting along the way. They still looked very foreign to me, with their dark faces and loose dun clothing.

"Salaam!" they greeted me, making a gesture almost like a salute, "Salaam, huzoor! Salaam, memsahib!"

I reached the first camp, almost on the mountain top, overlooking the valleys and the snow ranges opposite. The scouts had christened it Elisabethsruhe, and I have never received a more pleasing compliment.

Again we were climbing into very early spring, here a spring as delicately vernal as a Greek pastoral. The air was like April, already sweet, but still lightly chilled with melting snow, which lay over the hilltops above, and among the high groves of bare pink-twiggled birches. The grass of the uplands was wintry brown, scattered with a few shy flowers. The strange-shaped peaks across the valley seemed to float, powdered white by fresh snow. A young boy watched beside a herd of silky-haired goats, and played tunes on a little whistle. Across the hillsides, as it drew near sunset, the cuckoos were calling.

I climbed up a little rise, to where I could look over

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

the other side, the way that we were going. To the left and ahead the rocky and snow-covered ridges led on, with green wooded nullahs between. Below me on the right spread the blue-shadowed canyons of the Indus, and, beyond, the mountains of the Hindu Kush, misty-blue under a gold light of sunset. I lay for a long time beneath a gnarled cedar tree, smelled the good spring earth, and looked, and listened. It was all most incredibly beautiful. . . .

One of the men started early next morning, pushing forward to reach the first group, and I was awakened in the dark twilight by the sounds of his leaving. My tent had been pitched opening toward the famous range of the Karakorum, that rose along the skyline to the northward, dominated by Rakaposhi and Haramosh. Now I watched them —my first great Himalayan mountains. Ethereal and unbelievable, they floated high in the sky, that was beginning to pale to the dawn. The coming of light on them was like music. . . . Slowly it grew, and swelled, to the bright golden marvel of sunrise on their snows. I slept again.

### VIII

It was here at Elisabethsruhe that we first saw our thirty Hunzas—eagerly awaited, as they were to be the porters for the mountain. Most distant of all our coolies, they had just arrived from their northern valley, and overtook us here. It was exhilarating to see them come strongly up the hillside, laughing and joking under their heavy loads.

They were tall dark sinewy-looking men, of Aryan build and features. Of an old race, the Hunza, they have lived in these mountains for many centuries, while conquerors of different nations have swept over the plains of India. To judge by appearances, they are unmixed with the Mon-

## *The Mountain Immanent*

---

golian strain that has drifted in from the northeast, or with the softer people of southern Kashmir. They appeared now like a firm foundation on which to base our summer's work.

At first they were to show themselves to us cheerful, willing, and ambitious, and we felt that we were fortunate to have such material. Later, we were to find them capricious and temperamental, physically almost as sensitive to hardship as Europeans, no stronger than the sahibs in load-carrying, and much quicker to succumb to illness. Altogether, as mountain porters, they were to prove most unsatisfactory. We made, probably, some minor mistakes with them. That would seem inevitable, for people who could not speak their language and did not know their customs. Lieutenant Frier helped a great deal, but, after all, he could not be everywhere always. It may be that in a different situation things would have gone very differently. That is a matter impossible of proof. But from our extended experience, I find it hard to believe that any handling would make them really useful men, for high-altitude work.

### IX

Even with the Astori, Balti, and Hunzas, we did not have quite enough porters, and the loads must still be carried forward in relays. This was from the very beginning a troublesome system. It meant we must always have at least two camps, with all their complications of cooks, provisions and cooking apparatus; and as things lagged, the line often stretched out into three. It meant that only at a place of a several days' halt was it possible to assemble all the loads together and check them over. This fact was to have disastrous results for the Expedition. There was also

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

of course the great delay inevitable to relays, so that we were to be almost two weeks covering a distance which the dak runner with our weekly dispatches later made regularly in three days. In fact, there proved to be nothing to be said in favor of the relay system—except that we got all the porters we could, so it was absolutely unavoidable.

For four days now we pushed on, slowly and awkwardly with our relays, keeping high up over the uninhabited ridges.

“This has meant,” I wrote to the newspapers,\* “that we must climb over two sizeable mountains; . . . we must slide indefinitely down their precipitous sides into the deep V-shaped gashes of the nullahs between, and then up again. The scouts did masterly work . . . but the route, though always possible, is often highly improbable. It has clambered up over rocks and boulders, and dropped down mountain slopes so steep that the coolies peer over and hesitate before they cautiously start down. It has forded mountain torrents, pushed through thickets and slipped along scree slopes. Over this route we must get almost two hundred men, carrying each some sixty pounds on his back.” . . .

The relays shuttled back and forth, the camps were pitched and broken up, and slowly all our tons of goods were kept moving forward over the mountains.

### x

We found traveling with a hundred and seventy coolies never exactly dull.

Day after day, in camp and on the march, we were always surrounded with them. Every night their bough shelters and cooking fires would spread out far around our

\* The *North American Newspaper Alliance* and the *Statesman* of Calcutta.

## *The Mountain Immanent*

---

little central camp. All day we would overtake groups of them resting, scattered like collections of grayish rocks along the trail. They seemed to have a great love of flowers, which they arranged in tasteful little bouquets and stuck in their caps, and often, as we passed, they would rise and salaam, and offer these bouquets gracefully to the approaching sahibs.

Continually in the routine of the journey, they made calls upon our attention. Every evening after dinner there would be several waiting for medical care, or to consult Lieutenant Frier about some new need. And every morning their loads must be assigned to them; and then they must be watched, to be sure they did not try to halve them. Often, after lifting the piles of goods on to their backs, they would settle down in comfort, with the loads serving as back-rests. Then the sahibs must go round, grasping them one by one by the arm, and hauling each man bodily to his feet again.

They constantly provided us with bits of unintentional humor—like that of the coolie whom we saw wearing for a cap ornament a gilded square of pasteboard, that announced in large letters, “Superior Mending.” Or the beaming congratulations of the faithful Ramana, when I appeared one day, after an overfatigued evening the night before—“Memsahib good! My god!”

And as the days of the march with coolies went by, moments of real excitement and drama often occurred.

On the second day in the relay system a pile of loads got left behind, and some of the plucky men of Baltistan volunteered to make an extra trip and get them. Night came and they had not returned. Lieutenant Frier went out with men and lanterns. Finally they appeared. He had met them traveling in the dark, along a narrow goat path above a

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

raging mountain torrent, each man carrying a hundred pounds on his back.

"And I saw one slip," said Lieutenant Frier. "It would have been the end of him.—The next man just caught him."

There was also the matter of the Hunzas' bridge. At one place three or four hours of travel could be saved by bridging a deep roaring river. The sahibs spent a morning felling trees and laying them across. In trying the bridge, one man slipped partly in the water, and it took the combined strength of two others, to pull him out, against the force of the current. That afternoon the stream rose a little, and the sahibs' tree trunks were swept away.

Next morning, before the camp was awake, the Hunza coolies stole out and built another bridge. They put their tree-trunks high on stone abutments, such as are commonly used in this region, to thwart the strength of mountain torrents. The coolies' bridge stood for days, while the Expedition crossed. . . .

Whatever their varying rôles, our army of coolies added always new shades of interest to Expedition life.

### XI

Every night on the route the Hunzas must be given their rations. It had been agreed that the Balti and Astori furnish their own, but we were to provide those of the Hunzas. Later, it was arranged for the Jemadar to receive the total rations in bags and distribute them, but at first we must divide them out for every separate individual. Lieutenant Frier generally rationed the Hunzas, and in his absence Herron acted as his substitute.

This rationing was a real ceremonial. It took one strangely back, to the old days of the far-distant past, the

## *The Mountain Immanent*

---

patriarchal days, when the ruler was also the father, the bread-giver of his people.

In the evening after the day's march, as the sun was setting, and the Balti and Astori were lighting their little cooking fires around our camp, the thirty-odd Hunza coolies would gather in a silent group, waiting. Then the sahib would have a bag of meal opened, and its contents poured out on a cloth on the ground—the whole wheat flour—"atta," it was called. One by one the coolies would step forward, each as he came unwinding from around his waist the long strip of cloth which served him alternately as girdle and receptacle, and holding it outstretched on both arms. And the sahib would stoop, and dip a bowl deep in the rich, brown meal, that trickled back over his fingers as he raised it, and so, rhythmically dipping and pouring, would empty bowlful after generous bowlful into the cloth held low beside him, carefully counting, until he had reached the agreed amount. Then the coolie would twist the cloth into an improvised bag and move away, and another Hunza would step forward....

There was, in this bountiful gesture of satisfying want, something reminiscent of the sowing of seed, the pouring of water over a thirsty soil, of all old gracious things of the primitive earth—something symbolic and solemn. Very seriously intent they both would be on the work, sahib and coolie, as the cloth filled and sagged with the staff of life, and as the tall white man fed, one by one, with the service of his own hands, those people who had all day worked for him.

### xii

... Daily now we were drawing nearer to the mountain. There had been already five camps for the different relays—

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

the one at Elisabethsruhe, two in Leychar Nullah, and two in Buldar Nullah.

As we moved forward, as we surmounted one by one the ridges, we found that still the summit was not visible, or else jealously hidden by clouds. Yet already we were crossing the high spurs of the Nanga Parbat massif, already we were beginning to have glimpses of those lesser summits—though lesser, still higher than any non-Himalayan mountains—that cluster around their chief. We had left the well-trodden ways; we were close under the walls of the hidden fortress. It remained only to choose the most advantageous place, and the siege would at last begin.

Feverishly we awaited every day the notes from the scouts, and every one in camp would come running to crowd around Merkl, when a coolie arrived with a chit. What might they be seeing up there, behind the screen of the nearer peaks? What conditions might they be finding, what situation, what hopes still hidden from our eager eyes?

---

## *Chapter VIII*

### THE QUESTION OF ROUTES

#### I

WORD from the scouts! We read eagerly over Merkl's shoulder. They were still on the way.

They gave details of the route they had found, the hills and forests and crossings of streams, the best camping places, with wood and water. This was, of course, all very important and interesting. But nothing yet about the mountain.

We were now camping in Buldar Nullah, almost at the foot of the Buldar Glacier. It might be that up this glacier there would be a good route to the summit. The distance was, on the map, a great deal longer than from Rakiot or Diamirai, but, by the same token, the slope might be gentler and freer from obstacles—avalanche-hung cliffs, or heavily crevassed ice-falls. It was decided to stay for a few days, and to send a scouting party up Buldar Glacier to have a look.

#### II

It seemed best here to discharge the Astori. They had proved the weakest and least willing of the coolies. In the days of waiting while the climbers were away, their wages would have been an unnecessary expense. And, what was far more important, they had no rations left, and the problem of obtaining more for them would have been a diffi-

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

cult one. We would still have the Balti and the Hunzas, and we must move with relays, anyway. To get rid of them appeared obviously wise, at the time.

But as things turned out, one wonders. With the Astori, the number of relays later could have been halved, and things checked up more easily. Everything would have been different, and that which was to happen might never have happened. . . .

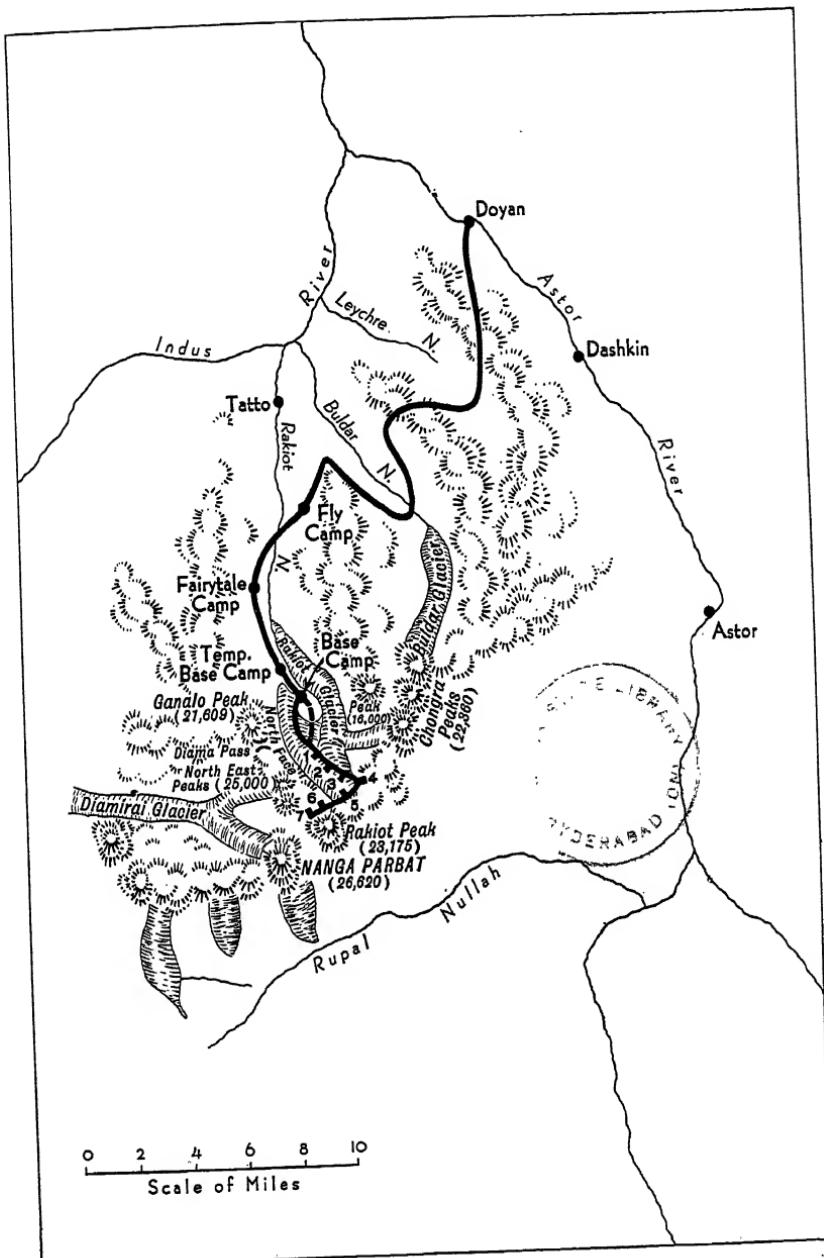
Unconscious of the fatefulness of our act, we sat in the sun, whose hot rays poured down on us through the thin air, and paid off the waiting Astori. A heap of leather bags beside us contained rupee, half-rupee and anna pieces. A hundred and twenty Astori. Eleven rupees, four annas for each.

One felt a certain importance, handling so much money, and dealing with so many people. We plunged our hands into the bags, and pulled out recklessly handful after handful of coins. We sorted them, and built little towers of wages in semi-circles round us as we sat on the grass. The coolies came forward, one by one. Each gave his name—Talawud, Hassan Ali, Mahomet Shah—and Lieutenant Frier checked him on the list. Then a pile must be counted off into a brown palm, the palm of a man sadly slow in mental arithmetic—and yet very quick to be suspicious, if the fractions of rupees did not add up clearly.

*“Ek rupee, do rupees, tin, char, . . .”* Lieutenant Frier would count, *“undis rupees.”* . . . And another *“Ek, do, tin . . .”*

The good spring smell of young grass was in our nostrils, mingled with the metallic smell of the coins; the sun lay burning on our shoulders; the dark pines rose around, and above them the bright white peaks.

It went on and on. The charms of the game began to



PLAN OF PEAKS, RIDGES AND GLACIERS OF NANGA PARBAT MASSIF  
 (Combined from Survey of India Map, Collie's Map, and our own observations.  
 We found no one map giving all details clearly and accurately.)



## *The Question of Routes*

---

fade. It became merely work. . . . It was after noon before all the Astori were at last paid off.

### III

Herron and Bechtold were chosen for scouts, and the doctor decided to accompany them. There were to be seven porters, selected by the Jemadar.

It was the first time any of the Hunzas were to venture on snow and ice, and it was quite a day for them. The bags of coolie equipment were emptied on the ground, and underwear, socks, and such routine garments were distributed to them. Then the coolies were allowed to choose their outside clothes for themselves. They wandered about, for all the world like women at a bargain sale—picking up, looking over, trying on, comparing, rejecting. Once clothed and equipped, they stood proud and awkward in all their new glory—complete from wool helmets, snow goggles, and mufflers wound about their necks, to mountain boots, and iron-clawed crampons with which they stamped the turf. All the morning they stood, sweltering in the sun, while their friends and relatives wandered round and round them, staring in wonder and admiration.

But in the afternoon, when it came time to start, loaded, up the heat of the valley, they shed several layers, including one below the waist. Fourteen skinny legs marched off, clad, quaintly enough to European eyes, in those new sahibs' garments, that are known to us as long Jaeger under-drawers. . . .

It was really a solemn and tremendous event for the Hunzas, this first departure. They made of it an impressive ceremony. After the seven were loaded, the whole group of thirty stood a moment with hands outstretched palm-up-

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

ward toward the west, in silent prayer toward Mecca. Then those who were staying crowded around the explorers, seizing their hands and pressing them to lips or forehead; and as they moved on, the most anxious walked along beside them, for a last brief contact.

Our farewell to the climbers must have seemed very casual, in contrast. To us it was an accustomed thing, merely a minor reconnoitering trip, for a view of the mountain. The men expected to be back with news, in two days or three. Our vital interest in their return was to know what reports they would bring.

### IV

The next afternoon, I wandered up by the side of the glacier, to sit under a tree and read. I had hardly settled myself when I noticed far across the ice moving figures coming toward our camp. First I had a glimpse of Herron, easily recognizable, tall, long-legged, bent slightly forward under his sack, loping along with animal elasticity. Then came the doctor's shorter figure, trudging heavily far behind. I did not stop to look for more. I raced back to camp, to hear the news.

It was quickly told. A short day had been sufficient to determine that cliffs and ice-walls barred on every side all possibilities from Buldar Nullah.

Again we must wait for word from Kunigk and Aschenbrenner; all our hopes and chances hung on what they might find.

### V

At the next camp, above Tattu, over the ridge in Rakiot Nullah, a new sport was developed by the climbers. It was

## *The Question of Routes*

---

called the *Fliegenjagd*—the Flyhunt—and was conducted with ice-axes.

That hot dusty camp on the arid plateau above Rakiot River was known as the Fly Camp—for obvious reasons. We had met them everywhere, of course, but never before like this. The place was a torture to live in, a horror to remember. All day the air was thick with black buzzing millions. They kept settling continually on every bare inch of skin, so that one longed for a hide that would twitch, like a horse's. At meals they swarmed on the food in the dishes; one waved them off with one hand while dipping the spoon with the other; they landed on the spoonful in transit, one brushed them from it, and opened one's lips to receive it; and they flew into one's mouth.

Every evening wound up with the excitements of the chase, the *Fliegenjagd*. During the heat of the day the flies had settled inside our tents, covering everything, two and three deep, like heaps of thick coal-dust. Now each climber, standing outside his tent, armed with his ice-axe, would beat and beat vigorously on its walls and roof, driving out the swarms. In a noisily protesting black stream they would pour steadily from the door, as the blows of the ice-axe fell. The process would be continued for about half an hour; and even then, a lively minority always remained.

## VI

After the Fly Camp, the Fairytale Meadow. From hell to heaven—that is almost what it seemed like, when at last with our relays we marched up the nullah to the next camping place, at once christened the “*Märchen Wiese*.” A broad green meadow, dusted blue with forget-me-nots, watered by a clear quiet brook, and rimmed around with the restful

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

darkness of great pine trees. And rising gigantic over it, reducing everything else to miniature,—meadow, tents, pine-trees shrunk to toy size,—a wall of silver whiteness filling the sky, the great north face of Nanga Parbat.

### VII

More tensely every day, we waited for final news from the scouts. If they should see no possible-appearing route from the head of Rakiot Nullah, then with our loads and our relays of coolies we must travel on, many more weary days, perhaps even weeks, over more ridges, to the point of Mum-mery's attack, the Diamirai Glacier.

On June 17th a messenger from the scouts arrived at the Märchenlager. Every one crowded round in excited silence, while he took off his gray hillman's cap, and pulled a much-folded paper from under its rolled brim.

“*Burra Sahib* (Big, or Chief Sahib) chit.”

Merkl unfolded the paper. He read: “... We climbed a mountain on the ridge between Rakiot and Buldar Nullah, so as to get a good view of Nanga Parbat.” (This casually mentioned climb was a first ascent of a snow peak of over 16,000 feet, or bigger than Mont Blanc, the highest of the Alps.) “According to our opinion, Rakiot Glacier will surely go.

“It leads up to the ridge between Rakiot Peak and Nanga Parbat (summit peak). The ridge seems to have one or two bad places, but we cannot say anything precise from this distance.

“We in any case favor attacking it here. . . .”

Like the snapping of a rubber band, the tremendous strain of uncertainty and indecision, of which we had become every day more conscious, suddenly relaxed. The

## *The Question of Routes*

---

question of the route was settled. We could go on to the next stage, the attack.

Soon, we were to experience a new strain, a feeling that was to grow before the end of the summer to an intensity almost unbearable—the desire to be always pushing on, and on, up toward the summit. But now, for the moment, we could rest. Everything seemed well with the Expedition. . . .

There was a detailed discussion of plans. Kunigk's chart of their view of the mountain was painstakingly studied. It showed a long roundabout route, winding up the snow, swinging far to the left or northeast to avoid the twelve-thousand-foot cliffs of the north face, and crossing three flat-appearing plateaus which could be used for camp-sites. Even this route presented some points of serious difficulty, points which might perhaps prove to be impassable. What can be climbed, on a great Himalayan peak, cannot be known till it is tried. The two most obvious problems were the getting up through a very steep and badly crevassed ice-fall to the first plateau, at the beginning of the route, and the reaching from the highest plateau of the ridge beyond Rakiot Peak. It must be counted as one of the chances, that the Expedition might succeed in conquering the first ice-fall, and other later difficulties, might work for weeks, and carry camps as far as the third plateau, and then might be stopped for good and all below that ridge.

There was therefore a little discussion of sending scouts over, to have a look at Mummery's route up the Diamirai Glacier, in order to know its comparative possibilities, and keep it under consideration as an alternative, if this way should present greater obstacles than was expected. But it would take many days to Diamirai and back, and climbers and coolies were needed to work here, establishing a base camp farther up the nullah, and starting on the mountain.

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

The final decision was to stake everything on the Rakiot route.

### VIII

There were half a dozen of us that night, well crowded together, eating dinner in my tent. Outside, was darkness, and a pouring rain. It beat merrily on the tent roof, and made us feel all the more cozy within. The candle-lantern, hung from the ridgepole, gave a flickering light in the small interior, and dropped grease on every one indiscriminately. Our food came to us out of the night, as if by real fairy-tale magic, appearing suddenly under our noses, in wet brown hands, slipped through the slit in the tent door. We ate half reclining against the low eaves, in relaxed sociability, with arms that tried not to get too much mixed up in neighbors' dishes.

When we finished, we slipped our shoulders even farther down the sides of the tent, and curled round into awkward comfortable positions. Our climbing boots, starred with little blue blossoms from the forget-me-not meadow, were close under one another's faces. The rain drummed on the roof above us. It had been a good day. We were at peace with the world.

"It is a very pleasant place, a tent!" sighed Merkl luxuriously.

"Too bad we can't live in them always," regretted Heron. And we began to plan in sleepy voices how when we got home we would eat all our meals lying on the floor on cushions, with our friends close around us, and everything as much as possible like Expedition life.

---

## Chapter IX

### CALAMITIES AND COOLIES

#### I

**U**NEASINESS began to spread through the Fairytale Camp.

During the second long day of storm, Merkl went over his accounts, and checked up on the various leather bags of rupees which he had entrusted at different times to various members of the Expedition. *Over eleven hundred rupees could not be located.* Wiessner's personal bag, also, which he had missed two or three days before, and for which he had been writing frantic notes back to the Fliegenlager, had never appeared.

Unhappy groups stood around, outside Merkl's tent door in the rain, trying to think, trying to plan where the money and the bag might have gone. There were anxious conferences and shouts across to the other tents in the forget-me-not meadow—

“Do you remember when you last saw—”

“Did you have—?”

Then the cheering thought occurred to some one that the rupees might have been entrusted to the scouts, Aschenbrenner and Kunigk. And some bags had already been sent on to the proposed site of the base camp. Perhaps Wiessner's had somehow slipped through, without any one noticing.

There was still uncertainty, and still hope.

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

### II

"All is lost." . . .

With these words Wiessner greeted us, as after a rainy journey, the last relay arrived next day at the site of the base camp. He was sitting outside his tent in the downpour. His square, usually cheerful face was dark. The raindrops collected and fell from his wilted hat brim, and ran in rivulets down his Kleppermantel. He looked as dejected as his surroundings. Never have I seen a damper, drearier spot—cedars and birches dripping, long lush grass dripping, the whole landscape shining wet in the gray light of the storm. Wiessner's words came so appropriately as the final touch to the scene, that I actually had to stop a moment to think what he spoke of: they seemed merely a natural expression of general despair.

Then he explained. It was worse than our worst fears. Everything was together now at last, and all the pieces had been gone over carefully. The eleven hundred rupees were missing, indubitably missing; also the personal bag; and—final climax and real catastrophe—seven bags of our porters' equipment. Absolutely irreplaceable equipment, collected laboriously in Munich during the autumn and winter, enough completely to outfit the thirty porters—friends' old climbing clothes and nailed boots, wool underwear, innumerable pairs of new stockings and socks and mittens and wool helmets. At some time in our wandering trip, full of relays and occasional strange porters, these bags had somehow vanished. It was finally decided, after infinite talk and discussion, and efforts of memory to recall what had not at the time been noticed, that they must have been stolen by Chilas shepherds in the night. But we shall probably never be sure of the manner of the loss.

## *Calamities and Coolies*

---

Ten of the Hunzas and ten of the Balti with their Jemadars, each group suspicious of the other, were immediately sent off by Lieutenant Frier to search the Chilas villages. They were gone three days. But it was all fruitless. No trace of any of the lost articles was found that summer.

Though something did come to light, in the end. The Assistant Political Agent in Chilas, who was interested and helpful, kept his official eye out for possible thieves. Gradually, during the next autumn and winter, one article after another mysteriously appeared in the Chilas villages. Then, however, it was too late.

### III

At the base camp, we grimly accepted the lack of these necessities—for we felt from the beginning that the search of the villages was a forlorn hope—and began to plan how to get on without them.

The first thing was to see just how much we still had. Herron promptly set to work, and he and I hauled out of the few remaining sacks everything that was left. It was a discouraging job. It almost seemed as if the thieves must have had an inside knowledge of the bags, so unerringly had they taken the best. We drew forth trousers, patched, and almost worn-out, boots that had dropped half their nails, or were parting company with their soles, one good ski mitten and one holey one—altogether a miserable collection. We turned bags inside out desperately, and shook out every last mitten. It was a bad business.

It was reckoned up finally that there was only enough to outfit, not very satisfactorily, nine porters. Well, then we must make our plans to attack the mountain with only nine porters at a time. But it was really a very bad business.

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

It would mean great delay, in getting the camps erected on the mountain, and in stocking them with provisions; and, as we feared then, and as it most certainly proved later, great complications also. It might well make all the difference between victory and defeat. However, there it was.

"We were careless!" said Merkl. "Everything had gone so smoothly for so long. We counted things so carefully at first. But then things went too well. We were careless." . . .

The vacation spirit, the gay irresponsible picnic atmosphere, never after this came back to the Expedition. Even the bright surface coloring of adventure was faintly dimmed. It was to be a more serious business than any one had realized.

### IV

We must cut our losses, and go on.

Like soldiers preparing for a siege, we started making our permanent camp.

It seemed good, after months of traveling, to have reached the end, and to stop at last; and it was constantly exciting to feel ourselves so near the goal. Regrets were thrown aside, and every one was full of eagerness and enthusiasm. Work began immediately, on the afternoon of our arrival. Merkl went through all his papers and made a final check-over of accounts. Bechtold began to get out his photographic supplies. Aschenbrenner opened the tool chest, and overhauled every sort of equipment, making all necessary repairs. Herron and I, after listing the porters' bags, turned to the provisions; we handled between a quarter and a half a ton, dumping the tins out of their sacks: all the cans of meat, milk powder, porridge, fat, jam, etc., etc., counting them, making lists, and then stacking them in rows in the white food-tent. When we had finished, it looked like

## *Calamities and Coolies*

---

a well-stocked grocery store. Early next morning, the coolies were set to work, digging and building a cave dark-room, for Bechtold's photographic work, in a side hill near the camp.

Every one was busy. In our temporary camps, after a day's march or in a day's halt, sahibs and coolies had lain around and loafed. But now there was so much to be done. Climbers moved about rapidly and purposefully. Sounds of chopping resounded from the nearby hillside where the coolies labored. In the familiar phrase, the camp was humming with activity.

### v

On the second morning, after another day of mist and drizzle, we woke to sparkling sunshine, and an exciting white world, fresh with a new fall of snow. Even here below tree-line, we had already begun to taste the weather of the mountain.

Now we could see clearly for the first time the place to which we had come. Around us in the deep narrow valley were tiny meadows, where the damp snow now lay white, with forget-me-nots and other bright spring flowers sticking their heads up through it gayly. Among the meadows were scattered clumps of birches and cedars. The branches of the cedars now appeared black, beneath layers like fluffy white cotton. Our cluster of little tents, under their snowy loads, looked like a Christmas postcard. In the background down the valley showed the far-away peaks of the Karakorum, pointed, pale blue tipped with white, resembling nothing so much as the mountains in an old-fashioned oil painting of the romantic school. In the other direction, filling the whole valley head, was a flashing, dazzling whiteness, a sight tremendous and magnificent beyond any comparison with anything ever before known—the walls and

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

peaks of Nanga Parbat. It was a beautiful spot, our base camp.

By noon the snow had gone, and the leaves of the birches, among the flowery meadows, danced and flickered with the delicate green of spring.

Sun and dry ground had for us now more than an esthetic meaning. We rejoiced that after days of rain, we could at last dry and air all our damp, smelly personal belongings. Expedition sacks were dumped out, and soon the exquisite spring landscape, so recently fair with snow, wore a new covering: sleeping bags and wool underwear, socks and mittens and crumpled windproof garments.

Thus the busy routine of settling in went on.

### VI

At dinner time that night, as I approached the dining circle, I heard again a tense quality in the voices. More trouble, apparently! What now?

It seemed that when Lieutenant Frier started to give the porters their regular evening rations, they, bored with several days of rice when they always preferred atta, had hunger-struck, and refused to accept it.

Some of the climbers, incidentally, had got equally tired of the way our cook, whose menus I had just that day begun to superintend, had constantly been giving us rice to accompany our meat dish: noon and night, always rice.

“Ah!” sighed Bechtold, when he first heard of the rice-weary coolies, “how those people are *sympatisch* to me!”

The twenty coolies sent down the valley to try to trace the stolen goods had been instructed to bring back atta ordered from Gilgit, but until they returned, it was, for those here, since they always refused European food, rather a question of “rice or nothing.” Lieutenant Frier now ad-

## *Calamities and Coolies*

---

vised our paying no attention to their strike, and thought that, like naughty children, they would forget their stubbornness by morning.

Meanwhile Frier's black-bearded dignified shikarri (huntsman), who had been roaming the nearby mountain slopes with field glasses ever since we reached the base camp, approached to hold with him one of those earnest, low-voiced sportsmen's conferences. He reported that he had seen ibex, on the mountains across the glacier. Lieutenant Frier was very reluctant to leave us, in the midst of hunger-striking coolies. But every one insisted that he must not miss this chance for a rare specimen.

So when we woke in the morning, we were without our adviser and interpreter. When it came to porter troubles, we felt as helpless as children deserted by their nurse. If the coolies should continue their objections, what could we say, what could we do? Surely there are few things more troubling than the feeling of not being able easily to communicate with people. And today porters were to be vitally needed. Before breakfast it had been decided that Herron and Kunigk should start forward immediately, to make a first scouting trip upon the mountain, leaving in the afternoon.

Anxiously we watched the coolies, as they came in twos and threes, wandering over from their fires and bough shelters scattered about in the clumps of cedars one or two hundred yards from our camp. They stopped by the ration tent. But they did not take the rations, as we had hoped. They gathered round and began to make speeches.

One hears that the Russians are very fond of getting together in groups and making speeches. If so, it must be the oriental blood in them, for by our coolies all summer, any occasion that possibly could be, was utilized for assemblage

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

and excited dramatic oratory. Even separate individuals would make speeches at each other.

Now they gradually squatted in a semi-circle among our tents, and one after another silver-tongued orator addressed them. Though we could not understand the words, the tones made it clear enough that the content of their remarks was inflammatory. There was one particularly active and talkative Hunza, whom we had already noticed as apparently trying to stir up trouble on the way in. He was big, with a black mustache, and spoke in a loud, very emphatic voice. Another of the ringleaders, a little shifty-eyed man, was dressed, appropriately enough, and conspicuously among the duns and grays, in a long faded red cloak.

It is much easier to sympathize with radical tendencies, when they do not closely affect one's personal welfare. Pretending to be busy with our own affairs, we really listened more and more uneasily, out of the backs of our heads, as we moved to and fro.

The oratory went on and on, and got more excited. Would-be speakers in the semi-circle jumped up hotly on all sides.

It seemed at last better to take official notice. Wiessner called the old cook, who spoke a few words of English, and with him as interpreter, asked the men to state their grievances. At that, voices became more impassioned than ever, and every one tried to talk at once. Wiessner stood solidly in front, and waited. First, it came forth that they wanted atta instead of rice. It was pleasantly explained to them that they should have atta, just as soon as it could get there. Then, they wanted a larger amount to eat of everything. As the object was to calm the storm, it was not urged how they were receiving the amount which was originally agreed on, and which they had taken every day for two

## *Calamities and Coolies*

---

weeks without complaint. Instead, Wiessner, always through the difficult translation-medium of the old cook, explained that it had been understood that as soon as they began to climb the mountain, they should be given extra rations. Now the complaints began to degenerate into a childish sort of fussing. In the army they gave you more food, and other luxuries besides. The Hardt-Citroen Expedition gave its coolies infinite wealth of wages, also sheep and champagne.

Oh, how we learned to curse that Hardt-Citroen Expedition during the summer! It had been by all accounts a really rich expedition, whereas ours was a poor one. It had, apparently, actually given its coolies almost everything one could think of to desire, disastrously setting up standards even beyond each porter's and pony man's fondest dreams; and since its departure the legend of it had grown in the native world far and wide—grown and grown until it overtopped the sufficiently glittering facts. According to our coolies' tales, the porters were furnished with far more luxuries in the way of food, equipment, and accommodations than sahibs would ever think of aspiring to. Never, all summer, were the Hunzas dissatisfied with anything, from the fit of their boots to the weather, without our hearing of that paradise of coolies, the Hardt-Citroen Expedition.

On this day, however, the coolies got tired after a while with complaining to us that we could not equal it. They went back to the first grievance, that they wanted atta.

It was all very well to be secretly amused by their chain of reasoning. But we were absolutely dependent on their goodwill, to climb the mountain! If they went off disgruntled, there would be no chance of getting other porters. The Balti, the Astori, the people of Nuggar, had already refused mountain work. Only the Hunzas were willing even

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

to attempt it. We knew this, and I suspect the coolies knew it.

So Wiessner remained good-humored and conciliatory. The rest of us, standing round in the background, tried hard to look bored and indifferent. But really we held our breaths, as we waited. The excited talk went on. Long, tense moments passed. . . .

At last, as inexplicably to us as it had begun, the tumult and commotion began to die down, the spate of oratory to dry up. The semi-circle got up and shifted. One or two coolies drifted into the ration tent. The sahibs again offered the rice. It was quietly taken, and the coolies went back to their cooking fires.

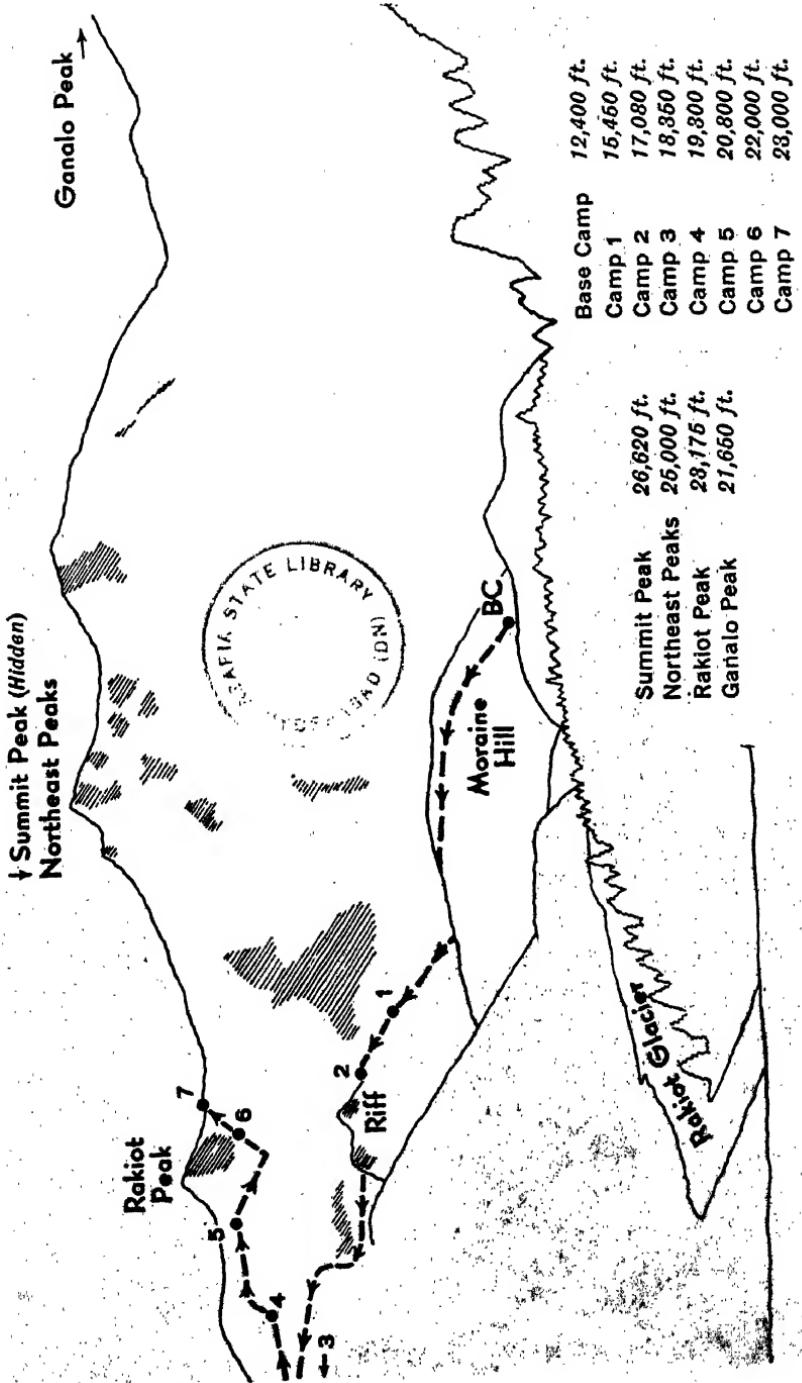
Every one breathed a deep sigh of relief.

### VII

It was a far more peaceable dinner that we ate that night, than on the evening before. The two scouts with six porters had got off without further incident in the afternoon; and everything seemed to be going smoothly again. We sat, afterward, around the bonfire on our zwieback tins, and enjoyed the soft, fresh night, and the firelight flickering ruddy red, on our faces, and on the rocks and cedar scrub nearby. Suddenly we heard an exultant shout.

“Hail!” called a cheerful English voice, “Hail!” And Lieutenant Frier strode into the circle of firelight, his hat cocked, his canteen over his shoulder. Following him came the dark-faced shikarri, one with a rifle and a sack, the other bringing proudly forward, to dump in the full light, a magnificently horned head of that rare animal, the ibex. A picturesque ending for a sufficiently variegated day.

The rest of the evening was a happy exchange of stories



סְרִימָן בָּשָׂרָב (בְּלִבְנִים)

卷之三

611

THE  
WICKE

2168

3100, 77

Group 4 1000-44

114 (2004)

卷之二



46 "DEPARTMENT OF STATE POSTAGE STAMP TO MINIATURE"



## *Calamities and Coolies*

---

of success—the tale of the ending of the strike, and start of the reconnaissance, from us; and from Lieutenant Frier, the history of the hunt, a matter new to the climbers. They listened interestedly as he told in detail of the sighting of the herd; of the long stalking, and the final shooting; and then of the charming awkward baby ibex, that ran toward the men, instead of away, after the shot.

"I could have caught it easily, and wanted to bring it back for a pet," said Frier, "but I was afraid it wouldn't live, it was so young." Then of how the shikarris skinned and cut up the animal, while Frier, perched on a safe eminence, watched the mountainside above, and called out "Kavardar! (Look out!)," whenever he saw a big stone starting to roll down on them; and of the return across the heavily-crevassed glacier in the dark, not too easy, without a lantern, for three men unroped, two of them heavily loaded, and all improperly shod. There had been, it seemed, a few ticklish moments. But here they were. And the shikaris would start back and get the cut-up animal at dawn tomorrow.

We enjoyed ibex liver with onions for breakfast next morning, and ibex pie for luncheon.

### VIII

Certainly we were getting used to living in the midst of excursions and alarms. The next action of the Hunzas hardly surprised us. When it was explained to them how they must take turns with the same clothes on the mountain, since there were now not enough for all, they began to look with great displeasure at the garments. Soon they announced briefly to Lieutenant Frier, with none of the oratory of the day before, that they had decided they were

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

fed up with everything, and they were all starting away to Hunza that very moment.

We did, to be sure, gasp a little at that. We stood rather silent and somewhat aghast, as we watched the distant gray-clad figures around their fires, picking up their personal belongings, gathering into groups, moving off down the valley, their backs vanishing one by one behind the most distant tree-clumps of the flowery meadows.

But already, since the catastrophe of the porters' bags, we had lost our surprise in the face of misfortune.

### IX

Still, it seemed ominously silent around the camp, after the coolies had gone. No sound of chopping, no cooking smoke, no moving figures or distant voices.

"Perhaps they'll meet the others, (the Jemadar and the ten Hunzas who were searching the Chilas villages), and they will persuade them to come back," suggested some one hopefully.

"Or perhaps," another contributed, "they'll meet them, and get every one of them to go back to Hunza, too." There was blank silence for a moment.

"I don't really think they'd dare do that," said Lieutenant Frier. "The Mayor recruited them at the suggestion of the Political Agent at Gilgit. The Jemadar is a personal friend of the Mayor's. He'll certainly try his best to make them stay with us. And they know that I'll report just what has happened; and they know, too, what the Mayor can do to them if they leave us without good reason, like this. He has the power to take away any one's land, or even to banish him completely from Hunza.

"Also, they haven't enough rations to get that far, any-

## *Calamities and Coolies*

---

way. Don't worry. They'll be back tomorrow, with their tails between their legs."

We tried to have faith in Lieutenant Frier's knowledge of the situation. We determined not to worry. But how strange and empty the camp seemed. We hoped that at least the deserters would not infect the search party down the valley.

That night after dark the group of searchers appeared. We counted them anxiously. The Jemadar had returned with eight coolies, almost as he had started. Not exactly the same, however; two of his band were lost to the insurgents. With these eight, and with three who had stayed, we had now enough to go on with. But it was a serious outlook.

### x

Next morning I was pulling my sleeping bag outside my tent to air, when I saw three coolies walking single file, coming slowly up the distant meadows. I held my breath. I wondered if they were some of our few faithful, or some of the mutineers. They passed my tent, going toward the center of the camp, and I recognized the mutineers. They did not greet me with their usual cheery "salaams," but looked both a little grim and a little sheepish.

At breakfast Lieutenant Frier told us that they had approached him, saying the rest were waiting down the valley just out of sight, begging to be forgiven and taken back. He kept them in suspense for an hour or two, and then let them come filing meekly up to get their day's rations. Three or four of the worst trouble-makers had not returned, but we thought that a good riddance.

Thus ended the third of our coolie strikes. There was no further definite trouble for almost a week.

---

## *Chapter X*

### RECONNAISSANCE

#### I

##### *The Himalayas*

THEY are too great.

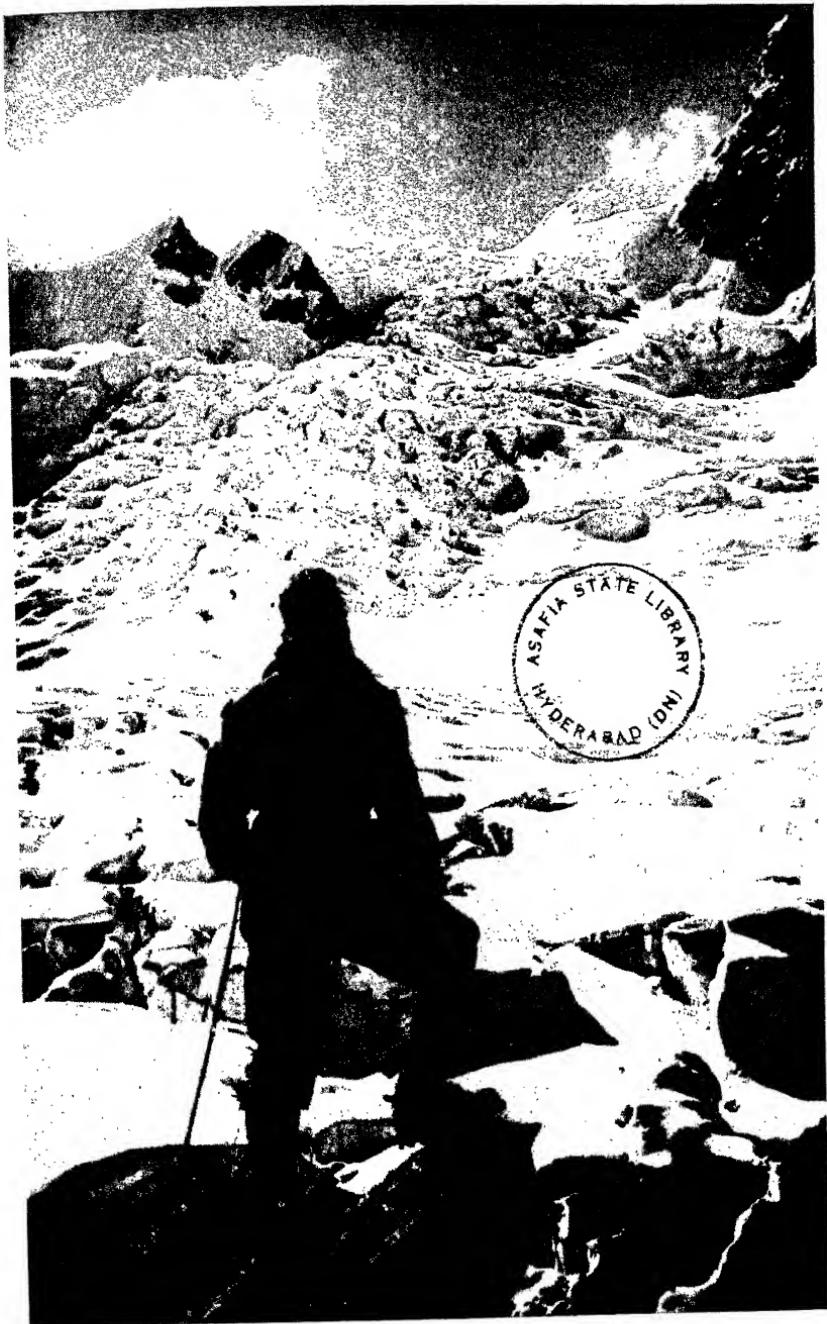
**T**Are mountains made for man,—  
Companions, friends,  
Wise counselors, and helpers at his need?  
Then surely these were never made for us.  
They are too great.

Some race of giants should mount up their flanks,  
Traverse their ridges, stand upon their summits,  
They speak in words beyond our pygmy grasp.  
.... They are too great.

*July, 1932.*

#### II

The departure of the two men for the reconnaissance brought to us all a sharp thrill of satisfaction. At last, we were reaching the end of all those many months of preparation, of all those crowded weeks of travel by sea and land, of all the spade work,—the lists and accounts and general organization. Coolies, provisions and equipment, those occupiers and burdens of our days, were at last pre-



"... THE LAST ROCKS AT THE FOOT OF NANGA PARBAT ... THE STEEP ICE-FALL RISING TO THE FIRST PLATEAU ..."



## *Reconnaissance*

---

paring to fulfill their purpose, taking on their real and vitally important meaning. The attack on the mountain was about to begin.

### III

It was back on the afternoon of June 24th, the day the rice-strike ended, that Herron and Kunigk left the base camp, to go upon Nanga Parbat and scout out the beginning of the route.

Although we had then actually been at the base camp only two days, yet to the climbers, impatient, now we had reached the spot, to come to grips with the mountain immediately, it had seemed already like two weeks of waiting. Bad weather had made any action impossible. But with the morning of June 24th had come the sun. They could not be held back a moment longer.

It had been planned that Wiessner should be one of those to make the first approach. But Wiessner was in favor of delaying still a day, until this last fall of snow should have more time to adjust itself, so as to reduce the dangers of avalanches. The first day or so, the loosest surface snow would be avalanching everywhere. Later, the worst of it would have already slid, and the rest, melting in the sun and then freezing at night, would become every day progressively solider and less likely to slide. It would also make easier going, economizing both time and energy. This was Wiessner's argument for delay.

But most of the others were chafing to get started, with the feeling that every day of good weather spent in waiting, was a good day wasted. Herron, who was only too eager, was selected, with Kunigk, who shared his impatience, as partner. Kunigk had already been on the scouting trip with Aschenbrenner, as far as any one had yet gone.

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

### IV

The decision was made early in the morning. At once there was a general bustle and tenseness of excitement all through the camp. First came the question of the porters, who were to be sent with the men one day on, to the edge of the snow-line. Would they continue their last night's hunger strike, or otherwise make trouble? After they had settled down, one wondered a little uneasily whether their favorable attitude would last, or whether when they were told of this trip, there would be a new flare-up. But all went well; and six coolies were equipped from the porters' bags—such pathetic remnants as were left.

As before, there was much choosing, and trying on, and rejecting, and choosing again. It would have been amusing to watch the coolies, and try to guess the motivation behind their artistic tasks. On the whole, bright colors seemed to go quickly, yet not always. There was one rose-red scarf, for instance, gayest of the gay, soft and warm and apparently desirable, that lay all the time in the thick of the choosing, and remained at the end still slighted.

I myself had no chance, however, for the close observation necessary for a serious psychological study, such as should undertake to determine the principles of choice and color preference governing Hunza coolies in front of old porters' clothes. The equipping went on literally behind my back, as I crawled in and out of the low entrance of the provision tent, baking hot in the sun, making up loads of food to be carried. A list had been written of what the climbers would need. It was supposed to be for two men for four days; but it was nothing if not generous. Tea and coffee were on it, porridge, rice, macaroni, soups, meats, jams, dried fruit, chocolate, sugar. When collected, there

## *Reconnaissance*

---

were twenty-two different food stuffs; and the weight came to (including cans, of course, since almost everything was in cans) two full porters' loads, or, as the coolies were then carrying, about eighty pounds.

Meanwhile Herron and Kunigk were overhauling their belongings, packing for a long time, perhaps for all summer. For it was thought probable that a permanent between-camp would be established, as near the edge of the snow as possible, and these two might not return again to the base camp.

At last came the moment when the porters were loaded and standing waiting to start, when the men must shake hands and actually set out. Above the trees Nanga Parbat rose white ahead—that unknown giant, virgin snow where no climber had ever been, avalanches of legendary size, unpredictable storms, all the uncertain dangers of a great Himalayan peak. Himalayan peaks, we had always heard, never hesitate to take their toll of those who attack them. And the two who now stood there leaning on their ice-axes, the youngest of the group, were to be the first members of the Expedition to venture on the mountain. With them, the thing was really beginning . . .

Everybody was very quiet, as they shook hands all round, and said good-by. The porters filed off first. The men followed, up toward the mountain. They turned to wave. Every one shouted "Heil." They vanished around a bend of the path, and were gone.

## v

The two climbers pursued first the way which Kunigk had already been over with Aschenbrenner, in looking for routes. It mounts some twenty minutes through pastures

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

full of flowers and great rocks, then swings sharp left up a hillside, among gnarled and stunted birches—the last trees. From the top, a gravel slope drops to the great Rakiot Glacier. Here one first realizes the size of things in these tremendous Himalayas, for the apparent tree-clad hill that one has climbed proves to be merely one side of the lateral moraine of the glacier.—In other ranges, the ridged gravel deposit of a lateral moraine counts as large if it is thirty or forty feet high.—From the moraine one has a good view of Nanga Parbat, and can see very clearly almost the whole of the route, as Aschenbrenner and Kunigk had thought that it might go.

Here the two must, of course, stop and look it over, and discuss and speculate a little. The suggested route up the snow-covered mountain was indeed, as Kunigk's chart had shown, a long, a winding, a roundabout one.\* And it must be so, to avoid the avalanche-hung precipices and broken ice-walls of the great north face. It followed first a steep much crevassed ice-fall of the Rakiot Glacier, between the cliffs of the north face on the right, and on the left the little black tooth of rocks the scouts had christened the "Riff," to that tiny patch of white smoothness close to the Riff, the "first plateau." Then it swung left, somewhere behind the Riff, to utilize smooth snow slopes, visible among the broken roughness, climbing steadily up by the small "second plateau" to the left-hand side of the broad white sweep of the "third plateau," that stretched, high against the sky, over toward the right to below the rock point of Rakiot Peak. From there the climbers must somehow reach the lofty snow ridge to the right of Rakiot Peak, leading up to the twin points of the Northeast Peaks, that rose over 25,000 feet into the upper heavens. Out of sight

\* See plan opposite page 82.

## *Reconnaissance*

---

behind them, somewhere in those snowy heights, waited the Summit Peak. Would this route go?

Now they studied with very special interest the steep roughness of the first ice-fall, which they were to attempt next day, and the location of the "first plateau," their objective.

Traveling with coolies, one has plenty of time for such halts as this, since they themselves like to sit down and rest every fifteen or twenty minutes.

Turning from the view, the two men slid down the gravel to the edge of the glacier; and for about two hours they followed up the rocky trough between the ice and the moraine. This, later, became a dusty, well-trodden route, over the earth and rocks, as dozens and dozens of bare feet on dozens and dozens of trips wore it clear. But then, they must find their own way among the big boulders and across the scree; choose where to swing up the steep side of the moraine, to avoid a possible tumbling of the towering seracs—or ice-towers, as the Germans more expressively call them—in the glacier on the left; where to cross the two lively glacial torrents that from the right rushed down in afternoon fullness, to lose themselves in caverns in the ice; and finally where to leave the glacial trough and scramble and kick their way up the precipitous gravelly slope, so as to strike the grassy hills that lay among the glaciers at the edge of the snow-line.

As they made their way over these hills, going always toward the mountain, they came soon to a region that the scouts had not reached. At their feet lay a little plain with a brook running through the middle of it, sheltered on both sides by the moraine ridges of surrounding glaciers. Nanga Parbat itself rose just ahead, half-hidden behind a huge snow-covered hill. Wood, they remembered, could

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

be collected only half an hour back, and water was at hand. Here they set up their tent, and from here they sent back their coolies, with word that they had found an ideal spot for a permanent base camp. It could not well be placed higher, for the great hill that shut off all view of their proposed route on the mountain was covered with snow down almost to the plain. Their note earnestly recommended that our regular base camp be moved as soon as possible to this spot.

So there, where the pioneers pitched their one lonely tent, with only the faithful Ramana to cook for them, was to rise in a short time a lively and populous settlement, with eight or nine sahibs' tents, coolie tents, a cookhouse, and a network of paths over the meadow.

But that night the two men felt themselves very much in the van, the other climbers very far, and the mountain very near. They eagerly looked forward to the next day.

### VI

At about six in the morning, with the early sun glorious on the snow peaks around, they started. It had seemed as if a glacier on the right might offer an easy road to the point where the main Rakiot Glacier came down the mountain, the proposed route up. To have a look, they climbed up the grass of the right-hand moraine. It proved no short scramble, but a full half-hour's walk—just to remind them that they were now among the giants. The look was encouraging; this approach to the mountain seemed a good one.

It went well from the start. On the rocks, they tied on the rope, using one about a hundred and twenty-five feet long. They kept about forty feet between them, and coiled

## *Reconnaissance*

---

the extra over an accustomed shoulder. They found a way across the side crevasse without any trouble, and stepped on to the snow of their first Himalayan glacier!

At that point it did not appear different from a snow-covered Alpine glacier. The crisp surface, still frozen from the night, crunched in the same way under their nailed boots; the sun was as bright; the air had the same cold morning freshness, exhilarating to breathe, like drinking a light chilled wine. Over on the moraine hill to the left, birds were twittering and singing.

The same technique also was appropriate as on an Alpine glacier; the ice-axe to prod and try the strength of suspicious-looking snowbridges; the rope to hold, if these seemed weak. They wound their way forward among a network of small concealed crevasses, watchful always, but able to advance with rapid ease. Soon they felt happily at home, in the familiarity of the whole procedure. At one place, as they went along at a brisk gait, Herron, leading, broke through into a particularly well-concealed crevasse. But Kunigk held him with the rope, and stopped his fall at once without trouble. Everything was going naturally and well.

Then, as the sun grew higher and hotter, Nanga Parbat began to thunder avalanches down its north face, uncomfortably close on their right. They had heard of the size and frequency of Himalayan avalanches, and especially of the avalanches of Nanga Parbat, for which it is noted, even among the titans. Here they were. A little disconcerting, perhaps, but quite as advertised. About every twenty minutes or half-hour one would come. A magnificent spectacle; falling eight to twelve thousand feet; first noticed as a sound like a distant express train, somewhere on the wall above, growing louder and nearer; then visible,

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

pouring down over precipice after precipice in huge waterfalls and cascades of snow; and finally reaching the glacier, and sliding out in a fan-shaped heap; with a roaring around and a great wind, and clouds of snow dust billowing up as it fell.

The two men remembered all the stories they had heard of the unbelievable size of these avalanches, and of the distances they could travel, and planned their route prudently as far to the left as was possible.

On the narrow tongue of moraine that divides this from the main Rakiot Glacier, they sat down to rest for a while. These were the last rocks; they were now directly at the foot of Nanga Parbat. Above were only snowfields and glaciers, all the way to the summit. They had reached a height of about thirteen thousand feet. They had been coming at good speed; it was not yet ten o'clock. They looked at the glacier ahead and above them, and decided they could easily do their scouting in a day.

From here they had a very good view ahead, of the steep ice-fall rising to what Kunigk and Aschenbrenner had christened "the first plateau." The vital question for them was whether or not a way could be found, among the great broken blocks of its seracs and the splits of its crevasses, huge and menacing beyond all Alpine imagination, to reach this plateau, where it was hoped to place a camp. This was the first of the problems to be solved on the projected route to the summit. To find its answer should be by Alpine standards a short and easy day. So they thought.

Their present contentment stimulated intellectual activity. Sitting on the rocks at the foot of Nanga Parbat, they talked about Greek art, and the Parthenon. They spoke of metope and pediment, angle and foreshortening, the



THE DAK RUNNER



THE ZWIEBACK TINS



THE HUNZA JEMADAR



RAMANA, "NANGA PARBAT COOK"

EXPEDITION CHARACTERS



## *Reconnaissance*

---

architectural and mathematical knowledge of its builders. Herron's active mind reviewed every detail.

"Isn't it wonderful," he exclaimed, "to think that once in the world's history men succeeded in creating something really perfect, something completely beautiful!" . . . They stopped and glanced up toward the mountain.

A quick change back from esthetics to mountaineering. They began to pick out their route, as far as was possible from below. And lifting their sacks to their shoulders, they started upward.

### VII

As they went on, they gradually began to have ground in upon them the size of these Himalayas.

They had made the natural enough mistake of calculating distances and times from past experience, automatically judging by the accustomed scale. But here, though the relations of things were the same—a glacier to a mountain, a serac to a glacier—yet the scale must be several times multiplied. They had not advanced very far up the first gentle snow slope of the glacier, before their error began to be brought forcibly home to them. The heights they had thought to climb easily and quickly, stretched on and on. Along the first glacier they had been able to progress fast, on hard snow still frozen from the night. But by this time the snow had begun to soften in the sun. They soon discovered that Himalayan snow, when it starts, can become softer than any Alpine snow ever seen. They plowed upward, wading heavily through deeper and deeper softness. The blazing noon sun was now pouring down on their heads with tropical violence, through the thin dry air. Here the atmosphere lacked the density and moisture that protects life in lower altitudes; they were sick and

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

dizzy with the poison of the sun's rays. They climbed slower and slower.

They had thought to do their exploring, and return the same day. Now they saw that they must certainly bivouac. They picked out a likely place, before the very steep part of the glacier begins—comparatively flat, and apparently far enough off from that uneasy north wall to be safe from avalanches. There they left their rucksacks, and forged their way on upward, hoping to settle the question of the route before night. But soon they realized that they could not in the afternoon get far enough to do that; they would have to leave it till the next day. So back to the bivouac place.

### VIII

They had never really expected to have to bivouac, and had not brought much. A tiny light tent, half a dozen crackers, and a can of Ovomaltine—that was their whole provision, for a hungry day, and a night of Arctic severity, in a bivouac higher than the summits of the highest Alps. No other food, no water, no cooking apparatus, no sleeping bags. They pitched the tent, and crawled in.

It was baking, stifling hot inside, in the mid-afternoon sun. They stripped completely, and lay panting. They found it a thirsty place, too. But they discovered that by stuffing a canteen full of snow, then holding it against the sun-heated sides of the tent, they could quickly melt enough for a few good mouthfuls. Later, in the night, they tried to repeat this process, with the canteen between their two bodies to melt, but it was too icy an object, and they had to give it up.

Gradually, as the sun dropped lower, the heat became bearable. Then when it vanished, with a glorious sunset

## *Reconnaissance*

---

view of the distant Hindu Kush mountains in Afghanistan, the air at once turned icy. It was a very long night. It proved far too cold to sleep much. Sometimes they talked, as they lay there shivering; and sometimes they were silent, and listened to the occasional thunder of an avalanche, or the rattling roar of a stone-fall on a bare rock-face just around the corner of the mountain above them. But mostly, they ate Ovomaltine. The only way they could—as powder, raw, out of the can. They had healthy appetites, after a day's hard exercise. By morning they had eaten over half a large can, between them. With the not unnatural result that they both upset their stomachs and found themselves very sick, "which," as Herron explained later in a chit to the leader, "has a bad effect on the leg-energy."

But, bad effect or not, the exploring must be done. The snow of early morning was much better. They went rapidly up, past their farthest of the day before, and in among the seracs. Seen near at hand, these ice-towers were most overwhelming and beautiful. Solid hard snow, not clear ice as often in other ranges, they rose in huge blocks, big as houses, some towering straight up, some toppling at fantastic angles—dead white in the sun, and casting blue or lavender shadows, with the green-blue depths of crevasses yawning between. They were the strangest and most wonderful of all the new sights of the Himalayan mountains.

But Herron and Kunigk did not give much time or thought to the region of terrible and fantastic beauty into which they had entered. It was the later climbers, following the route they had found, who had eyes for its scenic values. These first men were working too hard to notice. The great question now was continually, "Will it go?"

They would find a steep smooth way leading up among the seracs, plod up its steepness, wondering uneasily if it

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

were about to end in some impassable place, turn the corner of a serac, and see ahead yet another steep slope. It was anxious work. But still they were able to make a way, up and up.

Just when they thought they must be getting very near the first plateau, they came to a tremendous crevasse, with a snow wall above. Apparently the only route was to cross on a snowbridge to a place where the snow wall sloped from the perpendicular a little. But the snowbridge looked anything but solid, almost as if the first step on it would break it through. It certainly did not seem a desirable route to plan as a regular road for heavily loaded coolies. It appeared obviously impossible to go farther to the left. So the men began questing to the right. Boosted on Herron's shoulders, Kunigk climbed an ice chimney, to see if there were more hope above; and from there he wandered farther to the right. He found no route through. The snow was getting soft again, as the two men hunted, for more than an hour, for a better way. Everywhere crevasses cut off their advance, everywhere they were stopped and turned back. Finally they reluctantly decided that, after all, the snowbridge was the only way.

The first man ventured very carefully while the other held him. But it did not break. It did not, in fact, break till well on in the middle of the summer.

From here, it could not be much farther. Herron was feeling completely exhausted from illness now, so Kunigk advanced cautiously alone. He soon saw that the first plateau could surely be reached. The route would go! Then they turned back.

The snow was always softer and softer. At the moraine they decided, instead of following the side glacier, to return over the great hill, partly to try the two ways, partly



A SMALL AVALANCHE ON THE NORTH FACE



## *Reconnaissance*

---

with the hope that they might find less snow, and easier going. In this hope they were more than disappointed. The Moraine Hill was covered everywhere deeply. They were always wading to their knees and often breaking in as far as their hips.

### IX

Meanwhile Wiessner and Simon had left the base camp with a string of porters, for the purpose of establishing Camp One on the mountain. Reaching the between-camp just before sunset, they had barely settled in, when they saw two figures coming very, very slowly down the snow of the moraine hill. Every few steps they would plunge into snow up to their waists, stagger, and fall. When they fell, they were a long time in getting up again.

"I have never in all my climbing experience seen men more completely exhausted," said Wiessner afterward. As the two plodded into camp, he had ready for them tea, and their sleeping bags laid out on the ground. They dropped thankfully there, and lay motionless. Coolies took off their canvas puttees and their wet boots and stockings, and rubbed and pressed their legs with the crude sort of massage that these people use for fatigue.

Herron was very quiet, but Kunigk talked fast, and at first even a little incoherently. He wanted to assure the others that the route would go....

The scouts liked to tell afterward how wonderfully they were looked after, on this return.

"We never had a pleasanter reception," they said.

---

*Chapter XI*

## SETTLEMENT AT THE SNOW-LINE

## I

FROM the beginning, it had been felt unfortunate that our base camp should be placed at such a low altitude—only about ten thousand feet—and so far from the actual start of the climb. The scouts had chosen this spot, after going on ahead for a long distance, and seeing no water farther on. But if a possible higher location could be found, it had been planned to advance the camp just as near to the edge of the snow-line as could be managed. So all our unpacking, and building, and establishing ourselves in our beautiful valley, had been with the combined hope and fear of a moving day ahead.

It was no surprise, then, when the note sent down by Herron with the coolies returning from the between-camp, recommended that location heartily as a site for a permanent base. As soon as the reconnaissance came back and sent to the leader favorable reports about the chosen point of attack on the mountain, we began to turn all our attention to establishing this higher base camp. The work of moving was pushed ahead as fast as possible. Everything which had been taken out was now repacked, and strings of coolies were kept traveling back and forth, making sometimes two trips a day. To speed things up, the sahibs also acted as porters, carrying full loads from the lower to the upper camp.

## *Settlement at the Snow-Line*

---

### II

There in the high meadow sheltered by boulder-strewn slopes, beside the tiny stream fed with melting snow, the life of a small, self-sufficing community now began.

On one side of the stream, the little brown tents of the sahibs gradually gathered, scattered on the flattest spots of the rather hummocky ground, their entrances all facing toward the center, since wind was so infrequent that it need not be considered in placing them. There were also two taller white tents, one for a grocery store, the other for a workroom, with tools, typewriters, stationery, etc.; and a small cave was dug to store the benzine. In the open place in the middle of the settlement, around the black charred spot of the nightly bonfire, stood the double row of faithful zwieback tins, kept set for meals, with a box of salt and cans of jam and raspberry syrup. Among the tents were heaped together ten or twenty of the big gray Expedition bags, containing extra provisions—sugar, milk powder, porridge or leberwurst.

The dip by the stream held the cooking quarters, centering round a dirt and stone lean-to roofed with bushes, built by the coolies for a kitchen. Though there was not much visible refuse about, this soon became a place of odor and flies.

Beside it was the cooks' living tent. Here slept the Old Cook, with his gray goatee, his cringing deference, his awkward voluble English, and his dislike of the Hunzas. Seldom did he miss a chance to tell us that they were "bad people," and when he "translated," we often suspected from the length and tones of his speeches and the manner with which our innocent statements were received by the coolies, that he was taking the opportunity to interpolate little sar-

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

castic comments of his own. Here lived also Lieutenant Frier's cook, who assisted ours,—generally called "Khan-sama," (Cook, in Urdu) as he knew no English,—also gray, quiet, meek, self-respecting, and a very devout Moslem, spending long periods on his little square prayer rug on the edge of the meadow, chanting singsong prayers and prostrating himself to Mecca. Here was the Cook's Assistant, a pleasant, colorless individual, who cleaned the pots and pans, brought us our morning hot water, and did our washing. And last, the Cook's Son, curly-haired, swaggering, consciously handsome, with some three words of English, waiting on us at table with an air, and parting from me every night, as he took off the last of the dinner dishes, with a polite, "Good morning, sir!" Though the coolies were soon known by name, none of the kitchen lot ever acquired any names from us, only their official titles.

Somewhere near the kitchen were staked out our "flock" of two sheep, bought from shepherds down the valley, and renewed when necessary, so that we had always potential fresh meat on hand.

A path, that soon grew broad and well-trodden, led from the sahibs' quarters, by the kitchen on the stream, over to the coolies' settlement—two or three big tents, and cooking fires, and always a scattering of dark-skinned dun-clad figures busy around.

### III

Here, after we became well established, the base camp settled to a regular routine.

There was day after day of bright weather, every day hotter, so that we wore shorts and short-sleeved shirts, and stretched a cloth over four poles, for a shade when we ate, or to take our afternoon siestas outside the stifling

## Settlement at the Snow-Line

---

heat of the tents. Then when the sun went, it grew immediately cold, so cold that we "dressed for dinner" in heavy Expedition suits, and drew our zwieback tins to the bonfire, made with wood which two coolies were kept busy day-times bringing up from down the valley.

"*Ag, bot ag* (fire, *much fire*)," we would tell the Cook's Assistant.

There was a continual current of life and activity in keeping this settlement running, a continual busy-ness all day—except during the after-lunch period of the siesta. Then climbers, coolies, and cooks, all with unanimity retired to tents or under the awning to sleep; and the whole camp was as quiet as the dead, except for the constant buzzing of the flies. But for the rest of the day, there was bustle around the kitchen, and coolies were coming and going to the sahibs' side of the stream, to get new socks, or mittens, or have more climbing nails put in their boots. The Cook's Assistant would be leading our two sheep off to stake out in new pastures, or washing our clothes, down by the brook. And the sahibs were all sporadically occupied, with writing, repair work, or housekeeping activities. The latter were limited for most of us to tightening guy ropes and airing sleeping bags, but the cleanly Simon developed a passion for washing his tent floor almost daily.

There were frequent excursions out from camp—not only parties starting up the mountain, and coolies on their daily wood-gathering, but other trips down the valley toward the outside world. One coolie would be sent two or three hours down to tree-line, to gather rhubarb for our dinner, or another down to the nearest Chilas shepherd, to lead up two more sheep, to replace our little flock when the second was slaughtered. Or six or seven would start off for the four days' round trip to Rakiot Bridge, to bring

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

up stores ordered and sent there from Gilgit, three days' march beyond, up the Indus Valley. And every six or eight days, the dak runner would appear, with his bare hairy chest, and his black spade beard, over his shoulder a striped bag, tied and sealed with red sealing wax, a bag that held for us Europe and America, home, friends, and all civilization—the weekly mail!

### IV

Perhaps the most omnipresent and troublesome base camp business, handled by Lieutenant Frier, and in his absence by Herron or by me, and at last handed over with relief to the Hunza Jemadar, was the business of rationing the coolies.

As they were finally divided into four groups to go on the mountain, each group was rationed every three or four days, by a most complicated system. We must give a pound of rice, half a pound of dahl, and fractions of ghi and salt, per man, per day, for days at the base camp, and two pounds of atta for the mountain. We must work this out, with elaborate arithmetic, in pounds, then change it into kilos, as our scales registered only kilos. Then we must dip all the amounts out, from the different bags of coolie rations piled up by the benzine cave, and weigh them, each most carefully. And no matter how accurate one tried to be, there was hardly a ration-distribution when some coolie did not object to something. The objections may have been on sound bases—they may not—how could one tell, knowing scarcely twenty words of Urdu; and getting in the Old Cook to translate generally seemed only to add to the unpleasantness. One day, after the Old Cook's "help," two coolies in a fury—over what, God only knows—started

## *Settlement at the Snow-Line*

---

to peel off their Expedition clothes and throw them on the ground at our feet, ready to start back home immediately. It needed all our possible arrangements of twenty Urdu words, to soothe them again.

### v

If rationing coolies was the most unpleasant base camp business, taking a bath was surely the pleasantest.

We had haughtily renounced the effete luxury of folding bathtubs. But when Lieutenant Frier appeared with his, and offered the loan of it to any one who wanted it, there was not one person who refused.

It would be brought by the Cook's Assistant, watched over by Wahab, Lieutenant Frier's bearer, that perfect well-trained body-servant, intelligent, and dignified, and gracefully respectful. Under Wahab's superintendence, it would be set up in the rubber-floored tent, and partly filled from pans of hot water.

As one half-knelt, half-squatted in the small square trough of canvas, in the midst of the delicious warm soap-suds, one would seem to taste to the full all the languorous enervating luxury of decadent Rome, or of some modern Babylon. . . .

### VI

Around all our base camp activities, large and small, stood the mountains.

This little plain that Herron and Kunigk had found was rimmed about by grassy moraine ridges, behind which flowed two glaciers coming down from Nanga Parbat, the Rakiot to the north, or left, and an unnamed one to the south, or right, between us and the mountain's north wall.

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

So it was almost an island, bounded by these two rivers of ice. One could not wander far in any direction over the moraine hills without coming out above the gray, stone-covered, cracked surface of a glacier. On the end of the island, between us and the mountain, rose the Great Moraine Hill. It terminated at its farther side in a long ribbon of rocks, that ran up to divide the Rakiot from the southern glacier. These were the rocks where Herron and Kunigk had rested at the foot of Nanga Parbat on the reconnaissance.

We were so close under the Moraine Hill that it cut all view of our line of attack on the mountain. Its tremendous rounded mass seemed almost to fill the sky, with just the rock-and-snow tip of one of the Northeast Peaks peering over it. When we came, the Hill was snow almost down to the meadow—snow that rapidly turned yellow and old-looking, and vanished; and before the summer ended even its summit was completely bare, and of all the brooks that had rushed all day beside our camp, only the rocky channels remained.

Beyond the Moraine Hill, to the south or right side, there towered in dazzling splendor, under the changing lights of sun and cloud, and the bright snow dust of avalanches, some twelve thousand feet of almost perpendicular rock and ice—the north wall of Nanga Parbat. We were almost beneath it, as it rose just beyond the narrow unseen glacier.

Marching out from behind the Moraine Hill, to the northeast, or left, came a long row of the peaks of the Nanga Parbat massif, rising across the hidden Rakiot Glacier: first the two snow domes and the rock-and-ice point of the Chongra Peaks, then minor ones, unnamed, some only sixteen or eighteen thousand feet high.

## *Settlement at the Snow-Line*

---

As one turned to these lower summits, from the north wall, or the Chongra Peaks, one saw immediately the difference between all other mountains and the lords of the Himalayas, a real difference, not only in size but in kind. These might have been Swiss mountains, magnified. But about Nanga Parbat, about the distant Rakaposhi and Haramosh, there was an individual hoariness of dignity. The steep snow slopes, just under the curl of the corniced ridges, had that peculiar vertical striation, or columnar effect of a band of fluting, that is seen only on the very greatest mountains. The rocks never came clear black, but seemed always a little frosted over. The silvered lights and thin but ever-present snowy veil gave to the main mass of the higher peaks of Nanga Parbat an unearthly spectral beauty, a purely Himalayan quality, not shared by the clear-cut blacks and bright flat whites of the sixteen- or eighteen-thousand-footers that marched off down the valley.

### VII

Of one of these greatest mountains Herron wrote:

#### *Chongra Peak \**

At your feet a tremendous threatening mass,  
A tremendous threatening mass of split-up towers  
Of white opaque ice,  
Slowly moving on  
To unrealized abysses of ice  
Down out of sight beyond the soft green meadows of our  
moraine.  
Infinite masses of ice  
On every side,

\* Literally translated from the Italian. See Appendix E, page 320.

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

Hung from your rocks,  
And crawling slowly down  
Toward the broken chalky-white towers below.  
Snowfields almost vertical and fluted with lines,  
Reflecting the powerful sun in gleaming stripes,  
Everywhere an infinite number of almost vertical lines  
Intersecting fan-shaped at acute angles:  
Chaotic masses of high-lifted rock,  
And a cut-up chaos of ice  
Clinging in the heights:—

In the convex curve which bends against the sky  
High on the left up to your pointed summit,  
In the broken line  
Which on the right  
Dips planing down  
From your summit,  
In the multitude of forms and lines  
Which from base to heights  
From west to east  
You unite in yourself,  
You speak, you speak, Chongra,  
And you give a thousand meanings  
Which it did not have before  
To the sky  
Behind your lofty profile!

*R. H., July, 1932.*

## VIII

Even the lesser peaks stood out, tremendous and terrible enough, in all conscience, by sheer impressiveness of size. One day, looking at all these bright giants, that overawed me with their bulk of magnificence, I found myself putting

## Settlement at the Snow-Line

---

up beside them for comparison a corresponding line in the Pennine Alps, the great range that stretches from Monte Rosa to the Matterhorn, as seen from above Zermatt.

“Yes,” I thought, with a sudden rush of affection for those older friends, “the Alps really are *dear* little mountains!” . . .

This row jutted down abruptly to where the broad, gray, ice river of the Rakiot Glacier curved around them down the valley, and beyond its flat surface, away to the north, drifted in the sky the line of pale blue, fairy snow-points of the far-distant Karakorums.

### IX

Only toward the northwest, our view changed all its quality.

Minor rock mountains lay beyond the coolie camp and the near-by boulder-strewn hillsides—lower mountains, strange and desolately gentle, beside the stark magnificent presences of the great snow peaks—like unknown animals from beyond the world, with fantastic rocky points, and grassy flanks and shoulders.

They turned plum-color and deep blue, when the sun set gold behind them, and the shadows of the moving coolies stretched toward us across the meadow. The afterglow lingered softly, behind these gentle mountains. Then the groups of coolies wrapped in their long cloaks, silhouetted against the west, were like biblical pictures of childhood; and after the dazzling splendor of the day, the gracious twilight brought to the base camp a beauty that was lonely and wistful, and melted the heart.

---

## *Chapter XII*

### WORKING ON THE MOUNTAIN

#### I

WITH the final setting up of the base camp, the climbers could at last give all of their time and attention, their thought and energy, to work on the mountain.

A life began that bore a certain resemblance, both in its ordered hours and days, with their regularly recurring duties, and in its tense concentrated devotion to a single aim, to that of a monastic institution. We had reached the end of our traveling; we were here at the mountain's foot, to force our way to its summit. That was the thought that we breathed with every breath all day, that filled our sleep all night.

Some of us, of course, felt this more consciously, while others seemed to keep more the discursive interests of ordinary living; and often the thought of our purpose was lost, as perhaps it is also lost in monasteries, in attention to the daily round. But the one goal ruled the existence of all. For both climbers and coolies, life at the base camp itself was simply a time of repairing equipment and recruiting strength—of re-outfitting, materially and physically—between periods of work on the mountain. From now on, for over two months, Nanga Parbat was to be the center of all our lives.

## *Working on the Mountain*

---

### II

We were attacking by what is known as the Arctic method, now used on all the bigger peaks. A chain of camps was to be erected up the mountain, with tents and stores, stoves and fuel. In going up and down, making these camps—finding routes, breaking trail, leading coolies, and carrying loads themselves—the climbers would be gradually getting acclimated to work at high altitudes. When the camps, well supplied with food in case of storm, reached within hopeful striking distance of the summit, the climbers would start for the final push to the top.

### III

Wiessner and Simon, having arrived from the lower base camp with their coolies in time to greet the return of the reconnaissance, went promptly on next morning up the mountain, with a string of porters carrying tents and stores.

Following Herron's and Kunigk's tracks, they in two days established Camps One and Two. Camp One they put on a snow shelf under the lee of a serac, farther up than the scouts' bivouac place, in a location that seemed to them even more surely beyond and above the range of any possible avalanche. Camp Two they placed on the little plateau or terrace that had been originally planned for a camp by Aschenbrenner and Kunigk, on their view from the 16,000 foot peak, on the advance scouting trip.

This good job done, they returned to the base camp.

Meanwhile Herron and Kunigk decided that with the shortage of porters, because of the theft of the porters' equipment, it was no time for climbers to be sitting idle. Stores must be pushed up the mountain just as fast as

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

possible. Hardly recovered from the over-exertion and fatigue of the reconnaissance, they turned their energies to regular coolie's work. They left camp one night at three o'clock, in the cold dark, as one does on an Alpine ascent, so as to climb all the way on still-hard snow, and carried full-sized porters' loads of between thirty-five and forty-five pounds to Camp One. They made the trip in four hours: it had originally taken our professional weight carriers seven.—It is only fair to say for the Hunzas, however, that with practice their speed improved considerably.

The two men made two or three more load-carrying trips to Camp One and back, and now they had set the fashion, other climbers followed their example. These night departures for the mountain—with their low voices, and rustlings in the darkness, and the occasional flash of a swinging lantern—became a part of the regular routine of base camp life.

### IV

On June 29th, Wiessner, with Aschenbrenner this time, four coolies, and Wahab—Lieutenant Frier's bearer—to act as cook, started again for Camp Two, to take more provisions and to dig an ice cave there.

As far as Camp One, everything went well. They reached the camp, and put up the second tent; and the sahibs got out the stove, melted snow and made tea for the coolies. This must always be done at once on arrival, no matter how tired one might be. Soon they were comfortably established for the night, Wiessner and Aschenbrenner in one tent, the coolies and Wahab in the second. They fell deeply asleep.

Suddenly, in the middle of the night, Wiessner and Aschenbrenner were wakened by the train-like roar of an

## *Working on the Mountain*

---

avalanche, coming nearer and nearer. The sound grew until it deafened their ears. Now it seemed actually upon them. The tent poles snapped, and with smothering weight in the darkness the tent fell in. They tried to hold it up from their faces a little, and waited for the end of things.

Gradually, the terrific roar became less, and died away. Nothing more happened. They drew long breaths, surprised to find themselves still alive. They crawled out of the collapsed tent, and were immediately clutched at by terrified hands in the dark.

"Sahib! Sahib!" cried the coolies. Their tent too had been broken in.

It proved to be from the weight of the snow dust driven out from the edge of an avalanche, and from the gale of wind made by its fall. If the tents had not been somewhat sheltered by the ice-wall above, there is little doubt that they would have been blown completely off the shelf. The avalanche itself had swept over the spot where Herron and Kunigk had bivouacked five nights before.

The coolies did not sleep again, but spent the rest of the long night huddled together like sheep, praying with upraised hands and sing-sing chanting to the god of Nanga Parbat, to spare them until dawn.

When it grew light, they refused to go farther. Aschenbrenner with Wahab started up to Camp Two, Wiessner with the coolies must turn down to the base camp. Arrived there, the porters told their story to their Hunza friends. This avalanche was the last straw indeed. More positively and vehemently than ever before, all the coolies announced that *now* they really were going to Hunza, and they would not come back.

Discussion lasted two days. There were dramatic scenes.—By this time we were getting rather in the habit of dra-

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

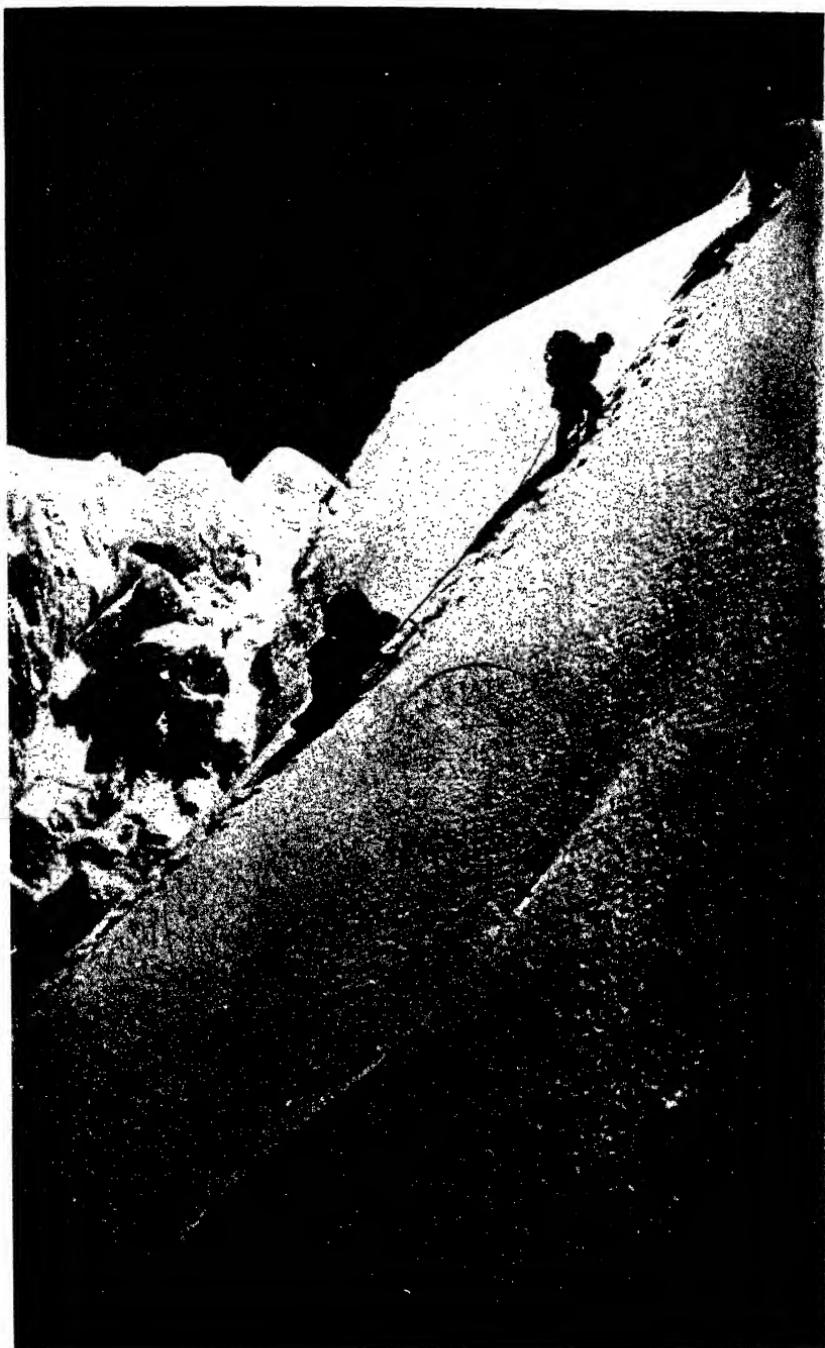
matic scenes with coolies.—The whole twenty-odd gathered, and for hours sat cross-legged or squatted on their haunches, in the middle of the sahibs' camp, while they were addressed by their Jemadar, a little slight man with a pointed gray mustache, a fiery orator if ever there was one, and by the reasonable voice of Lieutenant Frier. As before, only even more earnestly this time, fluent speechmakers kept leaping up in their midst, to argue with Jemadar or sahib.

The talking went on and on. In desperation Frier offered them more and more. The amount got up to five rupees a day for every day they worked on Nanga Parbat, or just five times the sum we had originally arranged with the Political Agent and the Mayor of Hunza. At last it was agreed that for these princely wages, they would venture again on the fearful mountain.

### v

This was the last of the general strikes. But coolie troubles were with us all summer, and proved one of the major causes of our defeat.

The coolies, though new to snow and ice, appeared in general quick and intelligent in learning its technique, and quickly became blasé about breaking through snowbridges into crevasses; and some of them developed into really very creditable climbers in handling the rope and ice-axe. But they showed always a lack of physical endurance and of load-carrying strength, as compared with the Bhotias and Sherpas of the Eastern Himalayas, and as soon as they began to go to any height they suffered more and more from illness. And worst of all, not one of them ever developed any climbing enthusiasm. It would have seemed in a way natural that a few, at least, should feel an interest in a



"SO THE WORK WENT ON, PUSHING CAMPS UP THE MOUNTAIN"



## *Working on the Mountain*

---

thing they grew to do so well. But work on the mountain was for them, from beginning to end, only a very uncomfortable means of earning great wealth, and to be shirked, or done in the laziest manner possible. Perhaps this was the more natural thing, after all, since it was, to such people, an incomprehensible activity toward an incomprehensible goal.

Lieutenant Frier's shikarri had again and again questioned him, trying to get to the bottom of the matter.

"Will their king give the sahibs a great deal of money, if they climb to the top of this mountain?" he had asked. And Lieutenant Frier's explanation that they would then be called "Bahadur" (the loftily brave ones, or Princely Heroes, a title of great honor, worn by rajahs) never quite satisfied him.

Some of us remembered the stories of the eager competitions of the Everest coolies, and Herron discussed with Lieutenant Frier the possibility of starting some rivalry between teams, and artificially instilling a little competitive spirit into our men. But Frier seemed to feel that with these people it would not work at all. From what I have read, and what Kanchenjunga and Everest men have told me, I should judge that the Eastern Himalayan porters are of a quite different temperament, both less intelligent, and more open and cheerfully child-like, than our dark, unreliable, mysterious, most frequently sullen and quarrelsome Hunzas.

### VI

As the camps were being pushed up the mountain, careful organization became absolutely necessary. Schedules were drawn up, schedules for the climbers, and schedules for the coolies.

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

Those for the coolies must be most elaborate, since because of our loss there were only clothes for nine, and it was vitally important that there should be no avoidable delays in returning to the base camp and changing. So the coolies were divided into four groups, A, B, C, and D—two groups of five each, and two of four—and these were shuttled back and forth, to keep always nine at work. They must then be dovetailed in with the goings and comings of the climbers; for the groups of coolies, as yet almost completely ignorant of snow and ice, were timid about traveling on the mountain alone, and needed an escort to instruct them.

Making these schedules was a complicated business. Lieutenant Frier and Wiessner, who arranged the coolie transport, after Merkl had made a schedule for the climbers, sat long hours together on the zwieback-tin chairs, with the zwieback-tin tables in front of them covered with papers, as they labored over plans.

No detailed plan was being carried out, however, in the provisioning of the camps: every one was making up porters' loads according to his observation of what was most needed. So when I came to the base camp (I had stayed to close the lower one, until the first of July), I got a rough estimate of the amount of food that had been sent up the mountain, as far as the climbers could remember the figures. I had already, as "Proviantmeisterin," been keeping lists of the food used at the base camp, so I now reckoned up the average of supplies consumed there per man per day. Thus the climbers were able to see both what had already gone and what proportions of different foods would be needed, so as not to carry unnecessary amounts.

The diet on the mountain was in general a fairly normal one, much the same as in the base camp, except that most

## *Working on the Mountain*

---

people ate less. There was, of course, a complete lack of fresh fruit and vegetables; and a scarcity of dried fruit and vegetables developed, for we proved not to have brought quite enough with us. We had taken pains to carry, however, a tremendous amount of sugar, that energy- and heat-producing food, as the body craves it abnormally, living at high altitudes. In the form of fruit drops, it was also immensely popular with climbers and coolies while climbing. Our fifteen kilograms of them were consumed before the summer was half over.

Eventually altitude was to affect diet more radically. Most of the men reached a height where reluctance to eat began to be a serious problem—the height varying greatly with the individual. Above this point, it has been generally found that climbers must have specially tempting delicacies. Our men, like most Continentals, appeared then particularly attracted by very highly seasoned or smoked foods, although Anglo-Saxons seem more likely to prefer jams or fruity things.

### VII

The bright early July days went by, and camps and provisions were pushing up Nanga Parbat. At first everything kept very close to schedule. This was the schedule—part of it, at least, for it gave in detail the exact location on the mountain and the occupation of every climber and coolie, for every day, whether carrying loads between camps, climbing, or descending.

July 3—Aschenbrenner to finish ice cave at Camp Two.

July 4—Herron and Kunigk to find route from Two to Three.

July 5—Herron and Kunigk to dig ice cave at Camp Three.

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

July 8—Merkl and Bechtold to find route from Three to Four.

July 9—Merkl and Bechtold to dig ice cave at Four.

Before the establishment of Camp Five it would be necessary to decide how best to settle that most difficult, perhaps even insoluble, problem on the route to the summit,—the reaching of the ridge beyond Rakiot Peak.

### VIII

Working according to schedule, Aschenbrenner made at Camp Two the first of our famous ice caves. The idea of these was taken from Bauer's on Kanchenjunga. The climbers there had found them very practical, much warmer than tents on the windy ridges, and safer from avalanche danger on the slopes. As our experience with them in the quite different conditions of Nanga Parbat gradually worked out, they were not much used by the end of the summer. Although they did have their value, it proved not great enough to pay for the very great labor involved. But here, we were still in the first flush of our ice cave enthusiasm.

The general plan of all of them was this:—They were dug out with shovels into the slope of the mountain, with the entrance going steeply downward. Just inside it, was a square space barely high enough to stand up in, by stooping low. The rest of the cave was hollowed back and round into a sleeping platform, so close under the roof that one could not sit up straight, but must keep the head down as in a Pullman lower berth.

Each cave, as they were made, had its special features. This at Camp Two boasted a little slit-like window in one side, opening into icy darkness, which had to be stuffed



SERACS



## *Working on the Mountain*

---

with bags or coats every night. Its digger had broken through into a covered crevasse.

Aschenbrenner worked long and hard at this cave, alone on the mountain with Wahab to cook for him, while in the base camp below, coolie strikes and speeches went on, and the fate of the Expedition hung for two days in the balance.

### IX

Next, on schedule, Herron and Kunigk started up from Camp Two, to make Camp Three. They were well loaded, with tent, stove, sleeping bag, provisions, and shovels tied on top of everything, for they were to dig the ice cave and completely to establish the camp.

It had been thought a very good thing for the climbers to carry heavy loads in the beginning. It would get them in training for altitude, and for the rigors of the final push, which would have to be made without coolies.

The men had marked the general lie of the route from a distance, for here they were, of course, too close against the side of the mountain to see its upper part. They knew they must go slightly down, and across the glacier that lies to the left of the Riff, then up steep snow slopes among seracs, working always toward the left, to avoid the region above Camp Two, where the higher snowfields break off in a series of perpendicular walls of ice. Thus they would wind their way up to that almost flat plain under the long northern spur of Rakiot Peak, which the scouts had christened, the "third plateau."

From Camp Two, they started to the left, up the little snow hillock into which the ice cave was built, and toward the Riff. This was an easy way, twisting among covered crevasses, but avoiding the worst of the ice-fall just over

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

the camp. Through a narrow gateway between two ice-towers, like that strange rock cleft, the Brèche de Rolande, that leads between France and Spain on the mountain tops of the Pyrenees, they came out on sunny down slopes; and in a moment's running and sliding, they were on the glacier.

Here, there was a threat of ice avalanches, from the ice cliffs breaking off above a bare face of rock, that showed, dark-streaked in the universal whiteness, high on their right. But there was no other possible way: the glacier was too broken up to be crossed lower down.—That the threat was no idle one was abundantly proved a few days later. Then the next comers saw no traces of this first track: it was lost under tons of ice, great blocks often several feet in size.—

But, in spite of avalanche possibilities here, there was no better route. This must be rated as one of the slight but unavoidable risks. It was quickly over, anyway, for one could move fast on the level glacier. The two men crossed at a brisk pace, and swung to the right up the very steep snow slopes beyond.

The rise was indeed steep, and proved almost continuous. They breasted it slowly, up and up, swinging sometimes to the left or the right, to take the grade more easily, or to avoid half-open crevasses, or the possible path of ice blocks, which might at any moment fall and start small avalanches, as they broke off from some one of the many seracs. The white shapes of these ice-towers were always around them, with more rising always on the skyline above. They were not like those in the typical ice-fall, however, with sharp and angular lines predominating, split up thus by the irregularities over which the ice sheet slowly creeps. Here were strange new formations, rising

## *Working on the Mountain*

---

out of the smooth snow slope, and breaking up its surface, like huge waves that curl and break,—tremendous curved cornices, with icicle fringes along their lower edges, or mounds, dropping off sharply on the lower side into the deep pits of crevasses, or ice walls and ridges, sculptured into points and rounded lines by the sun. They towered here and there—twenty, thirty, forty feet high, out of the landscape. It was not easy to plan a way among them that should be always the very safest possible.

The route the men eventually worked out was not changed all summer.

As the two climbers crawled up and up among the white seracs, the snow was growing always softer, the sun always hotter, their loads heavier. They came at last to a tremendously broad, wide-open crevasse. Beyond it the slopes looked less steep and broken, smooth white snowfields up to the plateau. They did not see any way across, however, except the narrow span of an unusually spectacular snow-bridge—spectacular but impractical. They made a search. Finally they found that it could be got around, to the right. By now they were very tired. There was a small flat place here, safe from avalanches. It appeared to them a good point to stop.

They thought that later Camp Three might be moved farther on. For they realized that the distance, which had seemed more than long enough to them, finding a way, breaking a trail, skirmishing about under their heavy loads, would be rather short for those who followed them up a path. But Bechtold, coming afterward with coolies, reported he had all he could do to get his men even that far, that they were moving slower and slower, sitting oftener and oftener, and asking constantly, “Camp soon?”—As it turned out eventually, porters, if lightly loaded, would

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

make the distance from Camp Two to Camp Four in one march.

Herron and Kunigk worked for two days, digging the ice cave at Camp Three. The first day Kunigk dug, while Herron shoveled away the snow, as he threw it out. The second day they reversed proceedings. Herron had the idea of leaving a large round pillar of snow, from the center of the bed platform to the roof, as a useful and unusual architectural feature. Behind the pillar, this cave was high-roofed and spacious. . . .

So the work went on, pushing camps up the mountain, according to schedule.

### x

There were minor interruptions, and minor adventures, the sort of things that are likely to happen in Himalayan climbing.

A coolie, breaking through into a covered crevasse, dropped his load in terror. Herron and Kunigk went out on the glacier at dawn to try to rescue it, and I went with them to watch. They used the technique of the stirrup rope to lower Kunigk about a hundred feet down into the crevasse. His body hung in two ropes under the thighs, lowered alternately. It was an elaborate procedure, with one coolie holding each rope, and Herron directing and supplementing on both, while I lay flat on my stomach looking over the edge and reporting progress. An elaborate procedure, worthy of a better end, for although the coolie who had been there during the the loss was sure that we were at the right spot, and Kunigk wandered back and forth a long time in the dark depths of the ice, the load was not found.

## *Working on the Mountain*

---

Then, one night during the night, a large crevasse split open, most inconveniently, just below Camp Two. An experienced mountaineer could perhaps have got across it and up the almost perpendicular slope beyond, but never a loaded coolie. So a long ladder was constructed at the base camp, out of small trees cut down the valley, and the porters carried it up on their shoulders, and bridged the recalcitrant chasm.

There was also a minor cooking adventure, by which one evening two climbers narrowly missed suffocation. They made the mistake of lighting a Primus stove inside an ice cave. They were almost overcome by the fumes, getting out just in time, and still feeling the bad effects the next morning.

### xi

Even down in the base camp, life did not go on entirely without incident. One evening, sitting around our bonfire, we saw a marvel and a portent.

Into the outside darkness beyond the firelight an influence began to come, a faint something, hardly at first perceived as light. Gradually it brightened, and centered itself in a saddle between the two highest peaks of the north face. It became concentrated into a long ray, that shot straight up into the dark sky, like a searchlight, between two horns of shadow.

The ray between its dark bands brightened, and stretched farther and farther up the heavens. It dimmed the fire. It held the fascinated eyes. We watched, struck to silence.

Superstition caught at us. What might it mean for us, that sign in the sky? Should we take it as a good omen, or as a bad? . . . On this Expedition, with success so vital,

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

and so entirely dependent on powers outside our control, we had all become lightly credulous—without serious belief, but pleased when little things seemed to show that luck was with us. Now this sight stirred in us some of the deeper roots of superstition—awe, and unease, before a thing beyond past experience.

As we watched that brightening ray, bounded by shadows, shooting up from between the double horn of the high peaks, far out across the star-filled sky, we held our breaths in wonder. It was a spectacle greater and stranger than any we had ever previously seen; as these mountains were greater and stranger. We felt ourselves in a different world.

It came as both relief and anticlimax, when above the saddle crept the bright edge of the moon. . . .

### xii

On the mountain itself, the men had entered the very home of the unnatural and the terrible. Merkl and Bechtold were staying at Camp Three.

“Afternoon,” wrote Bechtold, recorder for the Germans. “We arrange a kitchen for cooking outside, and finish the cave. Our sleeping bags and tents are spread out in the sun to dry. We keep looking up toward the heights of Nanga Parbat. We tremble a little at the thought that the great mountain may become ours.

“A few hours later: In the cave, we have made everything ready for the night, and in front of the entrance we are admiring the sunset. Suddenly above us we hear a cracking and thundering. Very near the ridge that we had thought of as a route up the mountain, a gigantic ice-avalanche descends. The masses of ice fall behind a hillock formed by a

## *Working on the Mountain*

---

glacier. It grows quite still for a few seconds. Then, as if made of foam, a boiling cloud rises, and grows to a gigantic phenomenon, covering the whole mountain. We cannot escape from the unbelievable thing that is approaching. We can only look in wonder and amazement. The first feel of ice in the air reaches our camp, and the sun is hidden, as through the serene peace of sunset comes this storm, born of uncanniness. We go like blind men feeling our way toward the entrance of the cave.

"It is like night for several moments outside. The fall of the ice clouds lies on the camp like the fall of fresh snow. We stay huddled in our sleeping bags, and have grown very quiet. This was the answer of Nanga Parbat to our too-early thought of victory."

### XIII

The men always seemed glad to get back to the base camp for their rest days. Lieutenant Frier, who, not having climbed before, noticed and expressed many things that escape the conscious attention of the experienced mountaineer, said, the first time he came down, that it was like what he had heard of a return from the front lines during the War. At the base camp was rest, comfort, safety, normal life in a normal world,—on the mountain one was continually under fire.

"We are never allowed for a day to forget," I wrote in my newspaper cable July 10th, "that we are dealing with something alive and menacing. Because of their extreme geologic youth, and their enormous size and steepness, the Himalayas are not "unchanging hills." The mountain is never for many moments silent. Always comes the rattling sound of falling stones, the crashing of crumbling seracs, or

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

the roar of an avalanche. New crevasses break open every day on the glacier across our route, so that new ways around them must continually be found. Avalanches, the most dangerous phenomenon, fall many times a day, pouring like great cataracts down the north face. Twice the climbers have found in the morning avalanche blocks on the path used the previous day."

On the mountain, in fact, as at the front in Lieutenant Frier's comparison, the chance of violent death seemed a natural part of everyday living; not, as in ordinary surroundings, a startling intrusion from some cruder, more elemental world. There, the idea that a group of people starting out might not all return safely was generally an unlikely one, but there was never anything incongruous or inappropriate about it.

"Our route and our camp locations on broad plateaus are probably as safe as could be found anywhere on the avalanche-hung massif of Nanga Parbat," said my cable to the newspapers. "But in Himalayan mountaineering it is recognized that safety is only comparative."

### XIV

In early July, the men, coming down to the comforts of the base camp after one of their bouts with the mountain, found clippings telling of the death of Allen Carpé and Theodore Koven on Mount McKinley in Alaska.

Allen Carpé was one of the greatest of American mountaineers and lovers of mountains. These two men were friends of Herron and Wiessner, and the four had gone rock-climbing often on the cliffs along the Hudson. They were also acquaintances of mine, and Carpé had been very kind, taking a great deal of trouble to help me with equipment,



" . . . THE SUMMIT PEAK, AND THE SOUTH FACE, EVERYWHERE TERRIFICALLY STEEP"



## *Working on the Mountain*

---

when he was himself getting ready for this fatal Cosmic Ray Expedition to Mount McKinley. One of the last times we had seen him, was after an Alpine Club meeting, when we all sat together until twelve o'clock, while we asked him questions and listened to his talk about Alaska.

The news of his death came as a great shock. For some time we could hardly even realize and believe it. Though in Himalayan climbing the thought of accident and death is always present, still even there the climber himself never quite accepts it; and for this fine experienced mountaineer, who had been going primarily for scientific work on Mount McKinley, it had not even occurred to us as a possibility. There had been a joking agreement between the others and our men, that the first ones to reach their summit would send the second pair a cablegram; and we had several times speculated humorously as to why we did not hear from them.—Now we knew. And still the accident to these two men seemed an incredible thing. We read and re-read the clippings, for any explanatory detail, passing them silently back and forth.

Herron sat down to send a letter to Mrs. Carpé.

“...Although we climbers usually don’t admit it,” Herron wrote in part, “we are always more or less conscious that the strange and irresistible call of mountains is also a call toward the end of life. And for this very reason we love them all the more, and find their call more sublime. .... Our secret heart’s desire is that our end shall be on them....”

As with most climbers, Herron’s visible self in relation to mountains was almost always strictly practical—energetic and efficient, and full of the zest of physical effort. This was one of the very few times he ever expressed to others that feeling typical of the mountaineer, which he keeps hidden deep below the ordinary surfaces of his living.

On the mountain, work went on.

Merkl and Bechtold from Camp Three scouted out the route to Camp Four, which they had decided should be placed near the edge of the third plateau, so that from it one could see Camps Two and Three, and the route up, and keep track of how things were progressing. It was to be used as sort of upper base camp, where the climbers could stay for rest days and bad weather; for they did not plan to descend again, unless in case of serious illness, until after the summit had been reached.

The coolies would unfortunately, however, have to use the time and energy of going back and forth. With them, there were two complications: clothes, and food. As to clothes, we hoped that those ordered from Srinagar as soon as our loss had been discovered might arrive any day.—As a matter of fact, it was more than a month later before they reached the base camp.—The food problem was even more restricting. The coolies would eat only their chappatis—large, flat pancakes of atta, mixed with a little “ghi”—a liquid fat—salt and water. They could not be persuaded to live, for even a short time, on our rations—zwieback and tinned foods. Their chappatis must be baked on flat iron plates, too large to heat adequately on our Primus stoves. Thus they must always bring with them chappatis for all their period on the mountain, so that if they were to stay any length of time, they could carry for the first few days practically nothing beyond their rations and blankets. Also, the chappatis soon became quite rock-like to gnaw, so that if we tried to keep the coolies long, we were trying to get work out of unsatisfactorily nourished men—bad, both for them, and for us.

## *Working on the Mountain*

---

The plan was, therefore, to accumulate all necessary stores for the climbers as quickly as possible in Camp Four, and then to have the coolies, carrying only their own things, come there in a two-days' march from the base camp, and after one rest day, which they always seemed to require, do their load-carrying work from there up. Camp Four, therefore, would become the base camp for all climbing activities, while only the coolies, under the charge of Jemadar, would remain in the lower base camp.

As it actually turned out, with the various unexpected comings and goings, there were hardly five days all summer when there were no sahibs at the base camp. But this was not according to plan.

The location of Camp Four once decided on, the digging of the ice cave worked out as a coöperative affair. Aschenbrenner and others took a hand, and Lieutenant Frier became quite fascinated in making square corners and having everything shipshape. He had never shoveled snow at almost twenty thousand feet before, and found it very entertaining; and every one was much impressed at how well he acclimated.

A second ice cave was built for a kitchen, and Camp Four was established. Ahead now was the question of Rakiot Peak and the Ridge.

### xvi

At the base camp, the climbers down for their rest days sat around the evening bonfire. Sometimes they were jocular, sometimes they spoke in low thoughtful voices, sometimes they sat for long moments silent. Their words, joking or serious, their thoughts, when they were silent, were of the mountain. Their faces showed sharp lights and deep shadows in the moving firelight. It shone bright on the

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

points of the nearby tents, and outside its red circle was darkness.

They talked of other Himalayan expeditions, and of present probabilities of success. They mentioned with amusement the coolies' saying, that we could never hope to reach the top, until a sheep should be sacrificed to the god of the mountain. They spoke of the difficulties of reaching the Ridge, and of what they might find beyond.

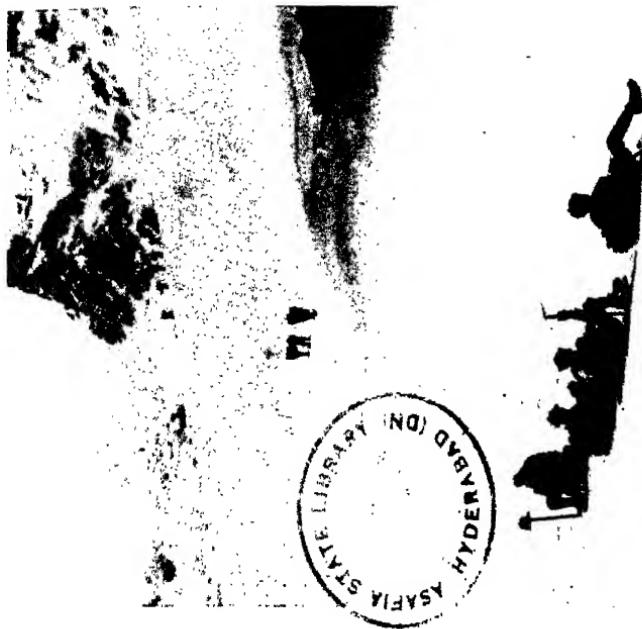
"It is very important for us all to work together," said one.

"But really we have all had too much experience," contributed another. "That makes it more difficult. When we have different opinions, we are all sure that our own opinions are good." They were quiet for a time. . . . Their eyes strayed up in the darkness toward the mountain. Wiessner spoke.

"That will be a great day," said he, "when I stick my ice-axe in the summit of Nanga Parbat."

"If we are all there," commented Simon dryly, "Nanga Parbat will look like a porcupine."

They laughed. But they were quickly serious again. They began to talk about practical problems of route and snow. The discussion went on till late into the night.



"... TRAVELING WITH THE COOLIES"



"... OVER A SNOWBRIDGE"



---

## Chapter XIII

### RAKIOT PEAK

*“In this odd business of mountaineering, a large number of unpleasant moments somehow combine to create an experience which is wholly delightful.”*

—ARNOLD LUNN.

#### I

THE Expedition was now face to face with the most troublesome problem of the whole route, one that threatened to be insoluble—somehow finding a way for loaded coolies over or around Rakiot Peak (23,175 feet) to the Ridge beyond. This is the ridge connecting Rakiot Peak with the Northeast Peaks, on the route to the summit.

Wiessner and Simon, scouting up along the long north-eastern spur of the Peak, located what seemed a good place for a fifth camp. They thought from their observations on this trip that it would be possible to reach the Ridge by making one's way through a very badly broken-up area low around the shoulder of Rakiot Peak, and so up through an amphitheater—or “Mulde,” as the Germans called it—that lies below the Ridge. The situation admitted at best only of a choice of evils. Wiessner and Simon did not believe that any suggested alternate route was even possible.

Kunigk and Aschenbrenner did not like the looks of this way among the seracs and crevasses. It was of course inevitably dangerous, that region was so much broken up. The seracs would melt and crash down in ice blocks in the

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

heat of the noon sun; and one must crawl around the edges of the yawning crevasses on narrow and uncertain footing—ice with no good place to hold, or snow that might break away under a weight. Such going might easily lead to a mis-step on the part of careless or awkward coolies, and in this going it would not always be easy to check a slip and to hold.

When this bad stage was passed, there would perhaps be another troublesome place before the Ridge. To Kunigk and Aschenbrenner the amphitheater, or Mulde, beyond, with its steep white sides, appeared just made to invite avalanches. Though most of the others were convinced that there was no way over Rakiot Peak which would be safer, or even possible for porters, these two still thought that somewhere high over the shoulder they might find a route. They determined to explore possibilities.

### II

They planned to bivouac their first night just under the crest of the northeastern spur that, seen from Camp Four, runs along the skyline to the left from Rakiot Peak. Herron and the doctor volunteered to accompany the two to their bivouac place, as unofficial porters.

The men were well equipped. They had with them a tent, a sleeping bag, and enough provisions for six or seven days, though they expected to take only three for the round trip. But there was always a possibility of storms. They carried also one of the Primus stoves, and plenty of blocks of meta—or solid fuel.

As they started up the steep slopes of the spur, they began to find soft snow. Aschenbrenner and Kunigk took turns breaking trail. Often they would be up to their waists, and

## *Rakiot Peak*

---

would slip back, as they tried to fight forward. The heat of the sun was becoming overpowering. Between the sun and the deep snow, they did not plant their bivouac tent quite so high as they had planned, but stopped about noon some hundred and fifty feet below the top of the spur.

Jammed spoon-fashion into the one sleeping bag, they slept well that night—too well, in fact, for they did not wake till six the next morning. A bright sun shone from a clear sky down on the white sparkling world; but so early it was still bitterly cold. They did not find in themselves any great enthusiasm for cooking. Also it would consume much precious time, at the very least an hour, to melt snow, cook and eat. They decided to start breakfastless.

They carried on with them plenty of food, a “tent-sack”—or light-weight combined tent and sleeping bag—and warm extra clothing: Kunigk retained a vivid memory of that cold and hungry night with Herron on the first scouting trip. They climbed straight up the side of the spur, and soon knew that invariable thrill of a ridge, the proud moment of topping it, and looking over the other side. From here they could see the rough sea of mountains toward the south, the way that we had come. They turned to the right to follow the ridge, on a broad plateau of snow, with occasional crevasses. The surface proved best toward the farther side. There, they were above the precipices of Nanga Parbat’s south wall, and could actually look down into Rupal Nullah, that well-known valley that bounds the mountain on the south, scene of the first approach and the exploration of Mummery’s party, and popular with British officers on shikarri.

For about an hour they went on, up the gently sloping plateau of the spur, traveling on fairly hard snow with a surface of breakable crust. Then they found themselves at

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

the beginning of the steep northeast face of Rakiot Peak. This whole face is a sharply rising snowfield, ending in a saddle on the north ridge, somewhat below the rock-and-snow peak of the summit. Here the snow was becoming harder and harder, but also steeper and steeper. Kunigk was very glad that he was wearing crampons: Aschenbrenner had none. They began to be conscious of the weight of their loads. Crossing the snow slope near its foot, there yawned ahead a sizable and troublesome-looking bergschrund—that particularly bad sort of crevasse formed where snow on a slope settles and moves, and draws away from stationary snow above. They worked over gradually to the right, to avoid the widest part of the bergschrund.

### III

Now they must come to a decision about their future route. Should they try to make their way on, up this snow? It would be fast, and straight simple going, if the snow was hard, even though it was so very steep. Or should they traverse across the ice-covered rocks to the right, toward the north ridge, and follow that to the summit?

At Camp Four, it had been a reconnaissance of routes; but now, without any avowed change of purpose from either, there was mutual agreement that their goal was the summit! There seems to be a natural affinity between climbers and summits. The greater draws the lesser toward it, as irresistibly as a magnet a needle.

But they did not forget their original purpose. They decided that the north ridge would be the better strategic position for scouting; for from it they could see more clearly what the chances were for a future traverse of Rakiot Peak, and all the possibilities for a route to the great Rakiot Ridge

## *Rakiot Peak*

---

that was the immediate objective of the Expedition. So at least they told each other, as they turned toward the rocks. But deep in themselves they were feeling an eager gladness reaching forward toward those black waiting solidities—the longing of the rock-climber to feel beneath him the good firm bases of the hills, rough and hard under pressing hands and gripping boot nails, after too many weeks on the slippery covering of ice and snow.

They hacked out steps across the steep hard-snow slope, and found a snowbridge on which they could cross the bergschrund. It was impossible to climb out, however, over the overhanging cornice of its upper lip; but, working upward with their ice-axes from below, they cut a little window and crawled through. From here it was hardly half a rope length to the rocks.

It was indeed good and satisfactory to be on rock again. But it was not here such easy going as the two men had anticipated. From now on, the rest of the route was to provide them with typical rock-climbing, of more or less difficulty. There was to be plenty of chance to use their technical knowledge and skill.

Aschenbrenner now went first, moving very slowly and carefully, while Kunigk held him, bracing himself and putting the rope around a rock point for greater security. The rocks were steep, with frequent patches of icy snow. In these places Aschenbrenner must at every step clear off the surface snow and cut a foothold for himself in the ice beneath. This was slow work, and sufficiently strenuous at that altitude. Thus he would advance a short distance. Then while he braced and held, Kunigk would move up cautiously to join him.

The rocks were so split up that there were always plenty of good belays around which the stationary man could se-

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

cure the rope; so there was little danger. But it was continually ticklish going, bad enough so that they could never move together, but one man must hold, while the other went cautiously forward. They did not find any good honest reliable stuff, such as the climber loves. The rocks proved breakable under the hand or foot, and there were many steep smooth slabs covered with ice and loose rock.

“There was no real ice,” Kunigk told of it disgustedly, “and no real rock. One must dance one’s way over little stones.” (“Dance,” of course, has reference to the light delicate mincing quality of the steps, not in the least to their tempo.)

Very slowly, they worked their way along. They placed their feet carefully at every step, among the uncertain going; their hands must be used most of the time; and they tested every hold before putting their weight on it, since this was not rock to be trusted. The traverse to the ridge was only three rope lengths in distance. It had already taken them three hours.

Now they were almost to the ridge. Kunigk was leading. He could go with a little less difficulty than Aschenbrenner on the ice-and-rock mixture, as he had on crampons. He had just reached a stand, and was braced, and arranging the rope preparatory to holding Aschenbrenner, when suddenly he dropped his ice-axe. A climber without an ice-axe, on a rope of two, in this sort of climbing, is in a bad way. Kunigk held his breath as it banged and slid downward.

By all the laws of gravity, it should have kept on down indefinitely, to the place where Camp Five was later to stand, and below. Most fortunately, it caught between two rocks and stopped, before it was out of sight, resting on a steep little snow slope. Kunigk climbed down and got it. It felt very good and reassuring when he swung the solid

## *Rakiot Peak*

---

strength of the ice-axe again in his hand, grasping it tightly this time.

Just below the ridge, they came to a place where the only possible way ahead was straight up a little perpendicular face. It was not entirely easy climbing. Kunigk reached above his head and drove in a piton, or iron spike, for security, before he started up.

At about half-past ten, they finally set foot on the ridge.

### IV

One thing at least had been positively proved by their trial of this way. It was no route for coolies. But though this point was settled, in other respects they were not so well pleased with things. The rocks of the ridge ahead, frosted with snow, and rising sharply in towers and pinnacles, looked really bad. It might prove impossible to get on. They began to feel uneasily that they had made a mistaken choice. However, no use to regret now.

They sat down on the rocks to rest, and to eat a belated breakfast—salami, zwieback, and chocolate. Dry food to chew on, it crumbled in their mouths. But it was hearty, and they brought to it a good appetite. They looked at the view, dropping away below them on all sides, as is the exhilarating effect of sharp ridges. They speculated on the likelihood of avalanches in the Mulde. But mostly they just rested. It had been real work to arrive here, and it looked like worse ahead.

After half an hour, they went on. It was much better than it had looked. The snow on the rocks was just snow, not a covering for treacherous ice underneath, as on the traverse. Where the rocks were bare, they were rotten, but not troublesomely so. It was thoroughly enjoyable here, mov-

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

ing upward, with the world falling away behind them. They were beginning to feel the altitude, now probably well over 22,000 feet, and were going slower and slower. But it was not unpleasant.

They came to a crack which must be climbed, for there was no way around. It was a passage that would rank as technically difficult at any altitude, with delicate holds on rotten rock. They negotiated it successfully. Above it, they found themselves on the saddle, at the head of the steep northeastern snow slope. They took a long breath. They felt themselves well on the way to the summit. What might be ahead was still uncertain, however.

Difficulties began to increase. They reached a place where the rocks above appeared overhanging and impossible. They thought they would have to traverse to the right, on into the Mulde, but when they started to look for a route, they found everywhere the same icy rocks that had caused them such hard work and such hours of delay on the traverse over to this ridge, earlier that morning. They turned back to the ridge again, and managed still to work their way up, avoiding the troublesome overhangs.

Now they were more and more feeling the altitude. They moved slower and slower. They climbed two or three pitches of real technical difficulty, on steep rocks with occasional snow and ice. The one who happened to be leading moved very carefully, on the rotten rock, feeling the altitude tremendously, now that there was need for strenuous physical exertion. He would reach up for a handhold, or lift a leg, with dragging deliberation; and often he would suddenly have to stop and pant, just in a most precarious position in the middle of a passage. This was not a good system. They found that it helped to rest for some minutes before attempting a hard part, so as to be able to do it all

## *Rakiot Peak*

---

in one breath. Even so, the excessive heart strain gave a feeling of uncertainty and of insecurity, which the difficulty of the passages would not have caused them at ordinary heights. They moved always with the greatest caution, and were not sorry when a bad bit was over.

As they climbed higher and higher, they were putting the other peaks of the Nanga Parbat massif below them. First they noticed that they had come higher than Ganalo Peak. Then Chongra Peak sank below their level. And at last they were above the Ridge, that longed-for ridge that leads on from Rakiot Peak toward the summit, that ridge to which the Expedition, with coolies, must somehow find a way.

At one place they could look down to Camp Four, and saw Herron and the doctor waving their Kleppermantels in greeting. They shouted back, and learned later that they had been heard.

Now they were getting far enough to see again the terrific precipices of the south face of Nanga Parbat, where it sweeps in a deep concave crescent around from Rakiot Peak, by the Northeast Peaks, on to the summit. And there at the end of the horseshoe, on top of a wall that dropped practically straight from it to Rupal Nullah, some fourteen thousand feet below, was the white snow pyramid of the Summit Peak of Nanga Parbat. They stopped, and looked, and wondered at the precipices of the south face, surely from this point one of the most striking sights of the whole mountain world. They mentally traced their way along the Ridge, and around between the Northeast Peaks, to the summit.

Only a brief time more on the rocks, and by a small snow ridge they had reached the first crest of the mountain. Beyond it rose another higher snow point, the true top. From

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

here, one could easily traverse into the Mulde, or to the Ridge.

Now they had found out everything they came for, as far as it could be told. Their scouting was definitely ended. But to reach the summit, they must go on perhaps half an hour. Of course they went on.

They descended about thirty feet into a dip, and then moved along a corniced snow ridge. They were feeling the altitude greatly. Already they had been climbing eight hours—eight hours of really hard work and strain. They would plod along fifteen or twenty yards, then suddenly they must stop and stand. It was a strange sort of sensation, as Kunigk described it. For they did not consciously feel badly; they seemed well, and were eager to keep on; but suddenly their bodies would refuse to work. After two or three minutes' rest, their bodies would be fresh and eager again, as if ready to run a race. They would start on, and moving always slowly but strongly, would walk another fifteen or twenty yards. Then again suddenly their feet would not move; their bodies did not seem to want to go, any more.

Progressing in this jerky fashion, they pushed their way up. When they saw the actual summit only twenty yards ahead, they linked arms, and arm in arm, in order that both should reach there together, they trudged on to the top, and sat down in the snow.

### v

On the summit they spent half an hour. They did not attempt to walk around much, as it used up too much breath. They had a fine viewpoint, but the air was not everywhere very clear. Toward the west, the direction of

## *Rakiot Peak*

---

the Hindu Kush in Afghanistan, the visibility was good, and they had a magnificent view of it—ten distinct ridges, with even bigger snow peaks rising behind. To the north they saw the Karakorums only dimly, big peaks on the horizon—the familiar Rakaposhi, and Haramosh, and others even greater but less known, among them undoubtedly K<sub>2</sub>—all seen in a slight haze. In the east, spread a sea of lesser mountains, rock points with small glaciers. Among them they recognized Dofana with its strange cleft double summit—like the Caucasian Usba—with which we had become acquainted at Elisabethsruhe. Still beyond, on the farther horizon, rose a continuation of the great peaks of the Karakorum. In the south, toward Kashmir, beyond the wall of snow points that bounds Rupal Nullah, the air was hazy again, with clouds drifting in over Nanga Parbat.

They looked along the Ridge. Beyond the Northeast Peaks, it curved on, with two minor snow points; then came the Summit Peak “himself,” seeming quite near from here. The south face of the mountain was simply unbelievable—its ridges, and the snow-plastered faces between, everywhere terrifically steep.

Kunigk went to the snow cornice, and while Aschenbrenner held the rope tightly, he crawled on his stomach to its extreme edge, craned his neck over, and was looking down into Rupal Nullah, some eighteen thousand feet below. Just a blur of dark colors, through blue haze from the tremendous depths, he saw its bottom—deep bluish, almost black, that must be moraines, dark misty green that was grass or bushes, with a long silver thread for the Rupal River. . . .

Out of the snow summit of Rakiot Peak rose a little rock needle, perhaps fifteen feet high. After a time Aschenbrenner got up, climbed part way up it, and reaching above

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

his head, nailed the flag of the Tirol with a piton, some five feet below its point.

### VI

A mist began to drive over Rakiot Peak from Nanga Parbat. There was no use in staying longer. In spite of altitude discomforts, the two men felt that invariable reluctance of the mountaineer to leave his summit, and the world spread out below him. Very slowly, they turned downward again.

The way down was a comparatively simple affair. They kept along the rock ridge to the lower snow saddle, able to drop easily from their hands over bits that had cost strenuous and difficult work to get up. From the saddle they followed the snow slope that they had decided against, on the way up. It proved indeed very steep, with the steepness of a convex slope, which is the worst kind. But the snow, breakable crust into which they went to the knees, seemed solid and without danger of avalanching, though to be especially safe they kept near the rocks on the edge. They ran it, taking turns, one racing down to the length of the rope while the other acted as anchor. They crossed the bergschrund easily, on a diagonal snowbridge, and rejoined their old route. It did not seem necessary to cut steps on the hard snow, for Kunigk moved with solid footing and safety on his crampons, and he could hold Aschenbrenner secure from above. Hurrying along, they reached their bivouac easily at 5:30—two and a half hours, down, as against eight climbing hours, up.

This snow slope, they decided, was proved quite possible for porters, but from then on, to the top, would be extremely difficult. They must accept the unwelcome idea of the Mulde.

## *Rakiot Peak*

---

Happy after a good day of climbing, they watched a most glorious sunset die to darkness over the Hindu Kush.—Twelve hours of sound delicious sleep prepared them to take up again the routine work of the Expedition. The four men's loads which Herron and the doctor had helped bring up, they carried down to the place decided on for Camp Five, on the Mulde route. They dug a small ice cave, left in it the tent, sleeping bag, and food, and returned to Camp Four. . . .

And the life of the Expedition went on, in the world of the snow.

---

## *Chapter XIV*

### THE WORLD OF THE SNOW

#### I

**I**T is very beautiful, and very cruel—the world of the snow.

Its beauty is so great it is impossible adequately to describe it. Beauty of form—huge tumbled seracs, blocks as big as skyscrapers, the V-shaped splits of crevasses, fantastic cornices and snowbridges, leaning and curling, carved by the sun. And the soft rounded contours of the smooth snow, so gentle they make you long to follow them with a caressing hand. Beauty of color—exquisite colors, unbelievably clear, pure, and delicate, as if belonging to some more ethereal world than ours,—sunlight and shadow, diamonded whiteness, rose and gold, lavender and ice-green and blue. At sunset they brighten into unspeakable radiancies, and they turn coldly solemn by starlight, and silver by moonlight.

But its cruelties are as omnipresent as its beauties. Not only the major cruelties that bring death—avalanches, storms, yawning crevasses, crashing seracs. Always there are minor cruelties also, against which one must go continually protected and armored, never relaxing one's vigilance.

All day there is the glaring sun reflected from the whiteness: whose light means aching eyes, however dark the glasses, and for eyes without protection, quick snow blindness; whose rays on the skin mean burning even through

## *The World of the Snow*

---

glacier cream, and for the bare skin, blisters and ugly sores; whose furnace heat on the head is almost unbearable in the middle of the day, and for the uncovered head quick sunstroke.

And always underneath is the cold of the snow, so that feet in too few socks turn numb and freeze, while the head burns; or, touching the rubber mat that lies under a sleeping bag, one starts back from an iciness like icy water. And in the night, or even if for a moment a cloud passes over the sun, comes into the air the deadly, numbing chill of interstellar space. Water hardens to ice, food congeals, and boots freeze beside one's sleeping bag.

Beautiful and cruel—hot and cold—it is a world where extremes meet. . . .

### II

Just as Kunigk and Aschenbrenner were returning to Camp Four after Rakiot Peak, I was starting up the mountain, to share the life of that world.

The climb to Camp Two would have been such a long one for my first day, and I was so completely out of training, that I planned to make the trip in two stages, spending a night alone on the edge of the snows.

My tent was pitched on a flat patch of snow on the fringe of a glacier, on the upper side of the Moraine Hill, some two or three hours above the base camp. To the right, as my tent faced back the way I had come, I had the gray rocks of the Hill; to the left a stone-covered ice ridge of the glacier, down which stones loosened by melting went clattering every few minutes. In front of me a little cascade rushed down the ice into a deep dark-green glacial pool.

Lieutenant Frier and the coolies helped me pitch my tent and unroll my sleeping bag. Then they climbed up over

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

the hill out of sight. Evening was coming on. The gray stones were getting grayer; the pool turned black; and there stole into the air the night chill that penetrates the bones.

As I lighted the meta under my little cooking outfit, and saw the flame flicker and burn, yellow and warm in the grayness, I suddenly realized, for the first time, the miracle of fire. I was primitive man, cold and alone among the twilight shadows of the dawn world; and here in a moment at my command were light and heat, cheer and comfort. It was good to be primitive man in the twilight, bending and cooking beside my little fire.

### III

In the gray dawn, Wiessner's square figure appeared over the brow of the Moraine Hill, clattering down the rocks at the head of a string of coolies. I packed up my loads, and entered again a world I had visited many times in other lesser mountain ranges, the world of snow.

The coolies derived a great deal of amusement from seeing memsahib on the mountain. Wiessner led one rope, and I the second. When I belayed my coolie properly, holding the rope around my ice-axe as he went over a snow-bridge across a crevasse, there were loud shouts of "Shabash! (Bravo!)" from the others watching. There were many questions as to how far I was going, and how long I would take en route, and much private talk and laughter among the porters, which it is probably just as well I could not understand.

But in any case, I was too much occupied with my own thoughts, really to notice them. I was realizing again, with a new vividness, the *satisfactoriness* of mountains. Climbers



"AT CAMP FOUR. WE HAD FRONT SEATS TO SEE THE SHOW"



## *The World of the Snow*

---

write and write of their feeling for mountains, trying to formulate it in words. But it always eludes formulation and definition and explanation. It has in it such a mixture of elements. Chief among the less lofty but very important ones, is the sheer liking for mountains. How can one tell *why* the crunch of one's nails, biting into the hard ice or the crisp morning snow of a glacier, is such a thoroughly good feeling? Or *why* the rough rock of a steep ridge under one's hands brings one the solidest of pleasures? It would be as easy to explain why it is so good to hear the voice or see the face of a close friend, so good just to be near him.

### IV

We wound our way up through the steep ice-fall, often finding new detours necessary, as crevasses had broken open across the old route. We passed the heap of stores and the wrecked and half-buried tents of Camp One, and went on to Camp Two. Since the avalanche, no one had spent the night at Camp One.

Merkel had sent down word that, as the crevasses were opening so widely between Camps One and Two, we should stop at the latter camp for two days, and take the coolies back and forth, bringing up provisions from Camp One, for fear the route might become impassable, later.

For three days more, we sat there unwillingly, caught in a storm.

It was the first break in the weather, since work had begun on the mountain. Almost, the climbers had come subconsciously to feel that there could never be a real break, that clear sky and sunshine would stay with them indefinitely, till, carrying out their schedule, they reached the summit. Yet provisioning and plans had always been made

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

with suitable allowance for bad weather. So this came as a sort of reassurance. It was a well-behaved storm, that did not last too long. It fitted exactly into the schedule, and left a feeling of even greater security. A storm had been allowed for: a storm had arrived. Now that item could be checked off the program, and the work could go on again without fear of further interruption.

Meanwhile Wiessner, Simon and I, held at Camp Two, were frankly bored. I, at least, had the occupation of writing my newspaper story, which was soon due. "Camp Two, Nanga Parbat, Altitude 17,030 feet," I wrote. "... We have stormbound with us here all coolies now on the mountain. We have had no communication with either the base or the upper camps for three days. We are reasonably sure that Lieutenant Frier is at the base camp superintending the coolies. We expect that the six other climbers are safe at Camp Four, sitting cozily in their three-room ice cave. . . .

"For us here, these days in a storm on a glacier a thousand feet above the top of the Alps are proving very comfortable, though monotonous. It is amazingly warm—fine snow, and hail without wind. Our thermometer registers almost sixty degrees." (I did not mention in this cable that it was really such perfect snow for snowballs, just correctly damp and sticky, that I was irresistibly tempted, and spent one morning beside my tent making a snowman.) "If it were not for the coolies having no waterproof coats, we could just as well travel in it.

"We are using tents, since the ice cave here was not dug deep enough, and the roof sagged in, in the summer heat. They turn out completely watertight, in this acid test, except for the heavy black rubber floors. Water soaks up through them and lies about in pools, but we are well protected by thick spongy rubber pads under our waterproof

## *The World of the Snow*

---

sleeping bags. We cook on the benzine cooker, sheltered by the remains of the ice cave, and have plenty to eat, as we happen to have with us . . . between two and three hundred pounds of provisions, also en route to Camp Four. As one cannot walk more than twenty feet in any direction without danger of falling into a covered crevasse, we spend the time, when not cooking, in or on our soft down sleeping bags. We are safe, warm and well fed, but find the days lack variety. Every morning I am wakened by the men beating their tent roof, to shake off the weight of snow collected during the night. After that, nothing happens all day, unless a coolie comes to salaam, and beg for sugar or cigarettes. We sit and listen to the sound of our own voices, the rattle of fine sleet on the roof, and the roar of frequent avalanches.

"I have just dug my waterproof typewriter sack out of a snowdrift beside the tent-door to type this story, and will send it down with a rope of coolies as soon as the weather releases us. It will be two days more before we can reach Camp Four and learn the activities of the other climbers."

... We found later that on one day during the storm Herron, Aschenbrenner, and Kunigk had actually traveled down to Camp Three, wearisome going through the soft new snow, and brought up loads.

### v

In the late afternoon of July 22nd, it cleared. The sun poured down over the mountain,—and again we could see the world of the snow, in which we were living. The little plateau of Camp Two looked directly into a confusion of seracs—huge tumbled blocks and pinnacles, tipped at all angles, like a fantastic dream of skyscrapers after an earthquake. They had been rather dirty skyscrapers, yellowish

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

and grayish, with all the days of melting. But how white they were now, in the late afternoon sun, after this fall of new snow clean from the outer skies above the world. No wonder white is thought of as the color of the angels—white, that dazzling purity, that combines in itself all the more obvious shades of the spectrum, and turns them into sheer light.

Toward sunset the hidden colors began to reveal themselves faintly through the whiteness, those exquisite pale luminous tints of the world of the snow. We roped up, and strolled up among the seracs in the direction of Camp Three. Looking back through clefts and gateways between the huge white towers, we could see the flame-and-gold sunset sky, and the dark blues and brownish purples of the lower world. More and more, as the sun sank, the imprisoned spectrum was escaping from the dominance of the white, and we were drunk with delicate color. Color changing, shifting every moment as one looked. We moved, tiny figures among the great ice towers, through a faery world; the light on the new snow lying daffodil, warming to pale gold and faint rose, the crevasses breaking through the surface in clefts of apple-green ice, and the changing shadows stretching out sky-blue or lavender. Never have I seen anything more fantastically beautiful. Beyond the greatest serac gateway ahead, lay the road to the summit. It might have been a pageant of welcome into the snow world.

All that night I listened fascinated to the voice of the mountain I was on, speaking in the roar of stone-falls and avalanches.

Wiessner and Simon went on next morning with three coolies; but I waited—partly to avoid traveling in the soft

## *The World of the Snow*

---

new snow, partly to make up loads, from the most necessary supplies at Camp Two, for another group of coolies who were arriving that same day. The following day I started.

Two more amusing days for the coolies, traveling with the memsahib—equally amusing for the memsahib, traveling with the coolies. They were in one of their pleasant and friendly moods. Their dark faces looked good-humored under streaky white masks of glacial cream. They tried kindly to instruct me about a square knot, when I tied my rope on with a bowline; then after I had demonstrated how well a bowline held, they all wanted bowlines themselves.

I led, following the track made by the men the day before, down among the seracs, across the eastern glacier, and up the steep smooth slopes, winding among seracs and crevasses. The coolies followed. I set the pace slow enough for my out-of-training breathing, when we moved. They stopped and rested, when they wished. At every halt, they begged for “cigarettes,” with coaxing smiles—it was the one English word they all had learned. I distributed a handful, and furnished matches, and they frugally lighted one cigarette and passed it round, each taking a few puffs, in turn. Then they offered me Hunza dried apricots, in exchange of courtesy. Or they went and picked icicles to suck, off the nearest serac, and always gave me the largest, finest icicle. All was peace and harmony between us.

Except for the little matter of the rope. And that adjusted itself amicably, in the end. That was when we went on from Camp Three. Two coolies met us there, come down from Camp Four, to take up loads. They untied, when they arrived, and then started up without putting the rope on again. I was already tied on to my rope to go, but I waited, pointed to theirs, and said, in what I trusted were command-

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

ing tones, "*Raisi!* (Rope!)." They gesticulated and began to argue. I sat down flat in the snow, and said, "*Raisi.*" They made long orations, something about the route being like a *maidan* (smooth plain). I sat, and said, "*Raisi.*" They made more orations, and tried to pull me up, to indicate that we should start. I said, "*Raisi.*" . . .

In the end they put on their rope.

Incidentally, we did cross on the route several covered crevasses, with holes where porters had broken through.

### VII

At Camp Three I had my first experience with sleeping in an ice cave. Not an altogether restful one.

When I arrived, it seemed gratefully cold and shadowy, as I crawled into it from the glaring heat of noon. I found that just over the entrance, the roof had frozen to solid ice a foot or more deep, and had sagged so low that one could hardly slide onto the sleeping platform.

Suddenly I discovered that as it gradually sagged deeper, it was cracking upward with its own weight! When the ice finally split through to the loose snow above, the whole thing would fall in. Already I could slip my flat hand, to the wrist, up into the break between the two sharp edges of ice. Every once in a while would come a little snapping sound in the ice.

Pleasant questions began to go through my mind, as I heard those slight creakings, and seemed to see the crack actually spreading wider. When it went, would it just fall around the entrance, leaving me untouched in the back part, buried alive in the cold dark? Or would the whole cave-roof fall in, with all its weight of soft snow, crushing me out completely in smothering suffocation? If something

## *The World of the Snow*

---

happened, would the coolies make at least an effort to save me, or would they rush off terrified down the mountain?

I was ashamed to yield to my fear, and go outside. For, after all, why should I expect it to reach the point of falling in, just at the time I was there? It might well have been splitting this way for days. It might last for days yet. (As it did.) But I managed to think of a good deal of cooking to do outdoors.

By daylight it was not so bad. But when I watched the gray fade to black, in the narrow band of outside light that was all I could see under the hang of the roof, then terror began to win. There was nothing reassuring to me about the consciousness of being on the mountain, now. It was a strange independent thing. It did not take humanity in as sharer in its greater life, as does the warm earth, that I had always known. It was indeed, as one of the climbers had called it, "discouragingly aloof." I have never felt myself so far from all the comfort of familiar things.

I lighted my candle, to settle myself for the night, for this was the appropriate hour to sleep. I arranged sleeping bag and pillow, took off my boots, and blew out the candle. I lay in the icy blackness, and that heavy sag of ice hung between me and escape. I felt a madness of imprisoned fear, a real sort of claustrophobia. I slept—occasionally—a little. Every time, and that was many times, that there was a slight crackling in the roof, I would wake with a start, as if from a pistol shot. Twice I slipped forward, and felt with my hand to see if the crack seemed wider. How I envied the coolies, safe outside, in their tent under the open sky. I would not have them know what the memsahib was feeling.

After the dawn came, I could sleep rather better. When I finally woke, I stayed to put my boots on, and laced them

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

very conscientiously. Then I slid, feet first, along the sleeping platform, under the droop of the roof, and out into the sunlight. . . .

One often does not completely feel what a strain has been, until it is relieved. As I looked around at the familiar blue and white of the daytime snow world, I realized that I had experienced something beyond a reasonable fear, before a too imminent-seeming and vividly-imagined danger. There had been that, certainly. But also, for the first time in my life, I had known a touch of primitive "panic." I had come face to face with Pan, god of the wild places that ignore man.

---

## *Chapter XV*

### CRESCENDO—AND DIMINUENDO

#### I

THE coolies brought down to me at Camp Three a note from Wiessner, who with Simon had just arrived at Camp Four. They reported finding the camp deserted, except for Kunigk who was slightly ill, and Doctor Hamberger. The others were all ahead. They too would push on in a day or so, when Kunigk was better. They sent me down also a note from Herron, written two days earlier, and left when he started up, a note full of hopeful news. Everything seemed to be marching on gloriously. It looked as if the mountain might soon know its conquerors.

“Tomorrow we go to Camp Five,” Herron had written, “then up to try to establish Camp Six, if possible, on Ridge between Rakiot and Nanga Parbat . . . The others (Kunigk, Wiessner, etc.) . . . are to follow, if possible with coolies. Camp Six is to be a secure retreat in case of bad weather. From there the first two groups will move right on. Camp Seven is to be at the end of the snow ridge, at the foot of the Northeast Peaks . . . before the final Nanga Parbat plateau. Once on the plateau, the way seems completely secure, only tiresome and fatiguing.

“So perhaps the next time I see you the top will have fallen! . . .”

Such were the plans and prospects, that morning. A slow

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

and easy two hours up snow slopes, and Camp Four was just above. Wiessner met me below the last pitch.

"How is the attack going?" I asked. And he told me.

Yesterday the four men had gone to Camp Five, as Herron had written. It had proved to be a slow, tiring trip, on breakable crust that let them in to their knees every second step. This morning Merkl and Bechtold had found themselves too mountain-sick to go on. They still lay at Camp Five. Herron and Aschenbrenner had started forward, toward the edge of the broken-up area below the shoulder of Rakiot Peak. As they approached, it had looked to them even more difficult and dangerous than had been anticipated, perhaps actually impassable. But they must turn back, leaving everything undetermined. For Aschenbrenner had frozen his foot very badly, what is called a third-degree freezing. They were now again at Camp Four. It was not known when Aschenbrenner's foot would be well enough for him to climb. Perhaps not all summer. Kunigk, who had been a little sick and feverish for the last few days, was getting worse. It was apparently appendicitis, and he might have to go with the doctor to Gilgit, five days' march away, for an operation.

### II

Things had gone ahead too easily, up till now. In the evenings around the fire at the base camp, the men had been looking at their purpose from a distance, with the perspective of distance. It had shown as a bright glory, the summit and success appearing deceptively near. They had looked right across the days of hard grind, the nights of discomfort, between.

Now they were in the midst of the drudgery of pushing on. They must not only meet objective dangers and tech-

## *Crescendo—and Diminuendo*

---

nical difficulties, to be overcome by their technical skill. They must also fight to keep wills keen, and eagerness unblunted, against stupid little everyday hitches and hindrances, minor illnesses, and, always, the continual dragging fatigue of working, of even carrying on the ordinary processes of living, in high altitudes.

The mountain was beginning to show us what weak little creatures we were, hurling ourselves against it and thinking to conquer it so quickly. The real conflict had just begun.

### III

Aschenbrenner's foot did not recover, though day after day at Camp Four he faithfully soaked it in hot water and then walked barefooted round in the snow, hoping to bring the feeling back. In two days Kunigk was off to Gilgit with the doctor, for an operation.

The loss of these two climbers was a serious one for the Expedition. In the group, Herron, Aschenbrenner, and Kunigk had in their general attitude and policies been the representatives of youth. They were in actual fact the younger part, somewhat younger in years, and a great deal in climbing experience; and their faults and virtues were those of the young. They were, in general, anxious to hurry, to push on and on, just as fast as possible. They were ready to work, to work even to the point of exhaustion, eagerly, passionately, but with no idea of husbanding their strength. They were sometimes perhaps a little too ready to take chances, and to try what might prove to be the impossible.

The others represented the more conservative attitude. They wished always to go slow, making sure of the foundations before advancing. They used themselves carefully, saving themselves, remembering always that there was a

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

long pull ahead, and that they must not wear themselves out at the beginning. They thought it better always to wait for good conditions and favoring circumstances, so as to have good hopes of success, before attempting an advance, rather than to waste their efforts on attempts which, because of bad conditions, seemed rather more likely than not to prove futile.

It had been a well-balanced team. But with Kunigk and Aschenbrenner out, the balance was now all in favor of a cautious waiting policy—the safe and sure. From now on, Fabian tactics were to dominate, more and more.

### IV

At this moment, however, there were for the active climbers no delays. Leaving the sick men at Camp Four, Herron, Wiessner and Simon hurried up to join Merkl and Bechtold at Camp Five. The five men spent that night in the ice cave there.

There seem to be only two sorts of nights, in climbing fiction. "The men slept soundly, in the quiet peace of the high mountains, and woke refreshed, for the efforts of the next day." It was not quite like that at Camp Five. Or, "Panting and with hearts throbbing from the thin air of the terrific altitudes, chilled and shivering, they huddled sleepless in their sleeping bags and prayed for the dawn." It was not exactly like that at Camp Five, either.

They were sharing sleeping bags. They always doubled up, above Camp Four, as it made so much less weight to be carried. Simon was in with Wiessner. Now Simon, however much liked and his dry wit enjoyed in general social life, was not a popular companion in a sleeping bag. This was because of two habits of his: first, that of always lying flat

## *Crescendo—and Diminuendo*

---

on his back, with both arms at his sides, which takes up an unconscionable amount of room in really crowded quarters; and second, that of keeping his Expedition suit coat on, which, with its stiff heavy cloth and all its pockets and buttons, makes an unpleasant night's associate for one partially undressed, and so unprotected by similar armor. Therefore, before things even started, an interesting night was anticipated by everybody.

This time it proved even better than expected. Twice in the night Simon got up and went out. When he returned, crawling into the low mouth of the ice cave, his back and shoulders were well covered with fresh snow. Then, snowy coat, buttons, and all, he would wriggle into the warm sleeping bag, against the half-undressed Wiessner. Wiessner's remarks on these two occasions were considered most appropriate, and even adequate, by an attentive audience. They did not, however, conduce to undisturbed sleep on the part of any of the occupants of the ice cave.

This night at Camp Five became for the climbers a subject for reminiscence, of equal importance with the tremendous climbing exploits of the next few days.

But it really was not an ideal beginning for such a period.

### v

Day came, and normally irritable from interrupted sleep, they crawled out, and cooked breakfast, and Herron and Bechtold went on. Wiessner returned to Camp Four, to bring up more coolies. Merkl stayed at Camp Five with Simon, resting from his efforts of the previous day.

The day before, Merkl and Bechtold, recovered from their mountain-sickness, had gone forward without loads beyond the point Herron and Aschenbrenner had reached,

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

in order to explore the broken-up area before the Mulde. Though they knew that it would be both difficult and dangerous, they did not expect to find it impossible. In fact they had succeeded in forcing a way through.

Real climbing ability was needed, however. It was a mad world of distorted ice shapes, which they entered—hardly a flat square yard anywhere among the ice masses—pinnacles, towers and cornices of white ice leaning threatening above—clefts, pits and chasms opening their green-blue depths below. But these men found nothing strange or fantastic in it; it was the sort of thing they were accustomed to. A little more so, perhaps, but still in type like a great many other ice-falls they had known in their climbing careers. They must cut steps laboriously along the steep ice edges, among the wide mouths of the crevasses; sometimes chopping away actually under the overhang of the seracs, which rose above them now in points and cornices, that might at any moment melt and crumble off in huge blocks—crashing down on them, as fatal as a fall of paving stones.

They worked forward now in a businesslike manner, but as speedily as possible. Even so, their progress was slow. Just the route-finding and step-cutting was of a sort that would count as difficult ice work, anywhere. There was call for all their technical knowledge. And because of the serac perils, this particular region would have ranked as very dangerous in other ranges. Here it was the only possible key to the summit.

Finally the key was turned, and Merkl and Bechtold returned to Camp Four.

This morning Herron and Bechtold, carrying heavy loads, must pass through this area. Though the route had been found and steps cut, yet steps smoothed and melted from the afternoon sun must be renewed. It was hardly less

## *Crescendo—and Diminuendo*

---

difficult than on the first passage. They did not find traveling too speedy.

Never was this ice-fall to become a popular part of the route. There was not one of the climbers who did not always strain to get over it just as fast as was consonant with safety, and not one who did not breathe more easily, when at last he emerged into the smooth Mulde beyond.

Today, it consumed so much time and so much energy that the two men realized there was no chance of reaching the Ridge for the sixth camp. They climbed up, and stopped, thankfully enough, in the Mulde, above the broken-up region; and pitched their tent under the lee of a bergschrund, as partial protection from avalanches.

From here was to take place the long fight toward the Ridge.

### VI

Here at Camp Six, the climbers said, they were first really troubled by altitude. In the process of acclimatization, it often seems as if a sharp line is drawn. Below it, life may be merely slowed down and eased off a little, but still normal; above it, one can never forget; it is a struggle even to exist. For them, in their then state of acclimatization, this height proved to be above it. Between Camp Five and Camp Six, they had just crossed the line.

All living was for them now rather like living in a slow motion picture. At such heights, every move becomes deliberate, almost to the point of grotesqueness. There are strange lingering pauses, between doing this, and turning to that. A few small actions drag themselves out over vast periods. Time is shortened, a day telescoped together till there is hardly room to accomplish anything. One moves slowly, as if under a malicious enchantment, through tre-

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

mendous efforts; and the hours go by; and so pitifully little is done—distance covered, or work finished. Then one stops moving, worn out by all this exercise of will power; and a long-enduring space of blank half-conscious torpor takes the place of the few moments' rest of lower altitudes.

When the efforts involve cooking, it is as if the flame itself shared the lassitude of the human beings. It burns and burns, and occupies itself perhaps half an hour just in beginning to melt snow for water. Gradually the white frozen stuff vanishes into a thin residue of liquid in the *dekkshi*. More snow must be scooped up in the bare hands, and packed down into it. Another half hour passes. Still one waits, blankly indifferent; it would be too much trouble to care. And one knows that for the food when finally cooked there is likely to be a lack of interest, sometimes even to the point of nausea.

Again, when something—an inanimate object, or an animate human being, perhaps—seems peculiarly perverse, there may flare out a childish irritation, of nerves tired just with the strain of pushing oneself through the daily routine. One kicks the obstinate stove, snaps unreasonably at one's annoying companion.

All these altitude symptoms are not, of course, fixed and immutable, but vary tremendously in degree, according to height, to physical condition, and to differences between individuals. As a small personal example, I myself, not remarkably strong, and quite unacclimated, experienced on first going up the mountain, most of the symptoms of altitude, during the first two of our four days at Camp Two, at just over 17,000 feet. While after two weeks spent at Camp Four, except for panting from any really speedy or strenuous exercise, I felt extraordinarily fit, and actually took one or two walks involving vigorous and prolonged



CAMP SIX IN THE MULDE



## *Crescendo—and Diminuendo*

---

exertion, just for pleasure, and without undue fatigue afterward. The men, gradually becoming acclimated in working up to Camp Four, declared themselves daily less and less conscious of any altitude symptoms, until Camp Six. There they were suddenly meeting them all over again, in severe form.

They did not now stay here or higher long enough for any great degree of acclimatization. But later in the summer, Herron and Wiessner were to find themselves so completely fit and untouched as far as Camp Four, that they felt sure that their bodies were becoming more and more adapted, and that the point where altitude would begin to be a real problem would have again been pushed much farther on.

### vii

Now, every one was still struggling against it.

Next morning there must be for Herron and Bechtold a slow and gradual gathering together of energies, for the work of the day ahead. Getting up, and breakfast, seemed the obvious move. But neither was eager to make it. It was much pleasanter to lie in the warm sleeping bag, wedged in, spoon fashion, to look at the back of the head of one's companion, and to think about starting, than to start. Or perhaps one of the two might suggest trying the other side, for a change. Then they would simultaneously roll over, with a unanimity perfected by many nights of practice.

Herron or Wiessner generally, by common consent, did the major part of the cooking—perhaps because they retained always a more healthy interest than the others in eating at high altitudes. So this morning it was Herron who moved first. Panting and struggling, he squirmed him-

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

self out of the sleeping bag. He set up the little rechaud, or aluminum dish and stand, in the snow outside, with meta burning underneath on a metal cigar box cover, and plenty of snow pressed well into the dish.

The first day of the fight to reach the Ridge was beginning.

### VIII

At Camp Four, Aschenbrenner and I had front seats to see the show.

Hour after hour we strained our eyes toward all the whiteness. There should be some word in English as emphatic as the Italian superlative *bianchissima*, to express this whiteness: pure, spotless, dazzling, over everything; here flat like chalk, there gleaming like a pearl, but always whiter, whiter than all one's conception of whiteness, in all one's life before. Nearby, where broken up into shadows and sunlight, it was overlaid with exquisite delicate tints, just the faintest breath of color; but there upon the high side of the mountain, in clear light, the universal sweep of it was scarcely broken. Only one or two tiny outcrops of black rock among the snowfields, and for the rest—just white, white! incandescent white everywhere, dazzling and blinding to unprotected eyes, in its blank purity exhilarating to the spirit.

We watched the steep slopes of the Mulde, below the Ridge. There it rose, spread out in all its white expanse, as conveniently as if we were seated in a theater to see a drama. First the long, white flanks of Rakiot spur, with the route to Camp Five running along it. Next, the black rock of the Peak, then, farther to the right, the concave white steepness of the Mulde, rising to the present goal, the high, white edge against the blue of Rakiot Ridge.

## *Crescendo—and Diminuendo*

---

“Objective dangers and technical difficulties are left behind, once one reaches this point,” writes Fritz Wiessner of that Ridge. On it swept, to the right, up to the saddle between the Northeast Peaks, next stage of our hopes. From there, a climber would be within easy striking distance of the summit.

We watched the whiteness. And in the Mulde we discovered two little black dots, going toward the right, away from a larger black dot that we knew was a tent. The tiny dots progressed so very slowly that we could not even see them move. Only by looking away, and then back again a few minutes later, we could make out that the distance between them and the larger dot was slightly increased. We watched and watched. With our small glasses, they took on size and shape a little, the leading dot rather bigger than the other.

They drew together, turning into one large dot, and stopped—for rest, or perhaps conference. Then one separated from the other, and went straight up the Mulde. Now it changed position even more slowly than before. What could be holding him back so? we wondered anxiously. Only a little distance, and it came down again. What impassable obstacle had he met?

After a while, we realized that one dot was stationary, while the other was getting farther from it toward the right. Only very gradually; sometimes for moments, it would appear not to move at all. But always the distance was widening. Now the two were far apart. The men must have untied, for the space was certainly greater than a rope’s length. What was being attempted? Why was he getting on so pitifully slowly? We speculated about possibilities. We handed the glasses back and forth to each other. We watched. . . .

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

At last we noticed that the moving dot was going now not farther from, but nearer to the other. Whatever he had tried, he had given it up. The two dots merged in one, as if discussing something. They split again, and moved toward the large dot of the tent. That was the end of the first day.

We had watched the dots travel out and back perhaps two hundred yards.

### IX

Next day we did not start looking until too late. Already two dots were moving at quite perceptible speed, well up the Mulde—slightly to the left this time from Camp Six. They crawled steadily up the whiteness, and at a good height vanished behind a shoulder of Rakiot Peak. Though we kept our eyes hopefully raised, we could not see them emerge anywhere above.

Much later, with intense disappointment, we watched them come down again.

### X

Herron and Simon suddenly appeared in Camp Four next noon, and we heard the full story of those two days.

It was deep snow that Herron and Bechtold had been struggling in, that first morning, when they could make no progress. Soft, feathery stuff, into which they sank helplessly—to the knees, to the waist, to the breast. No solid footing underneath to tread on, but a matter of clawing and pawing, putting in the ice-axe and almost swimming, without meeting any resistance anywhere to swim against, not even the liquid solidity of water. And always with the altitude clutching at the breath, so that every slightest mo-

## *Crescendo—and Diminuendo*

---

tion, in this tremendous effort to advance, left them with hearts pounding, panting and gasping.

The powdery yielding whiteness in which they floundered, the glaring whiteness around, dazzling even through snow glasses, the heat of the sun—it had seemed to them like some sort of endless nightmare. One must get on, and one could not get on. Dreadful exhausting effort, and hardly an inch gained.

When they had turned and tried to go upward, it became just short of impossible. So they kept fighting farther to the right. Surely soon it would be better; it must harden a little somewhere. Bechtold stopped at last, exhausted and discouraged. Herron untied, and pushed on alone.

He did not manage to cover any appreciable distance, as he kept struggling forward, stopping relaxed and motionless to gain breath, and then struggling on again.—I had seen how slowly the one black dot changed position on the white expanse.—But still he continued plowing to the right, hoping at every forward motion to feel under his foot a place where the snow would be a little less yielding. There seemed to be no such place. Noon was coming, and the heat of the sun was growing continually more vicious and sickening. He crawled back to where Bechtold waited, and they returned to camp.

That same afternoon Merkl and Simon arrived at Camp Six with loads. The plan was then made that the following day the four men, without loads, should start all together, so that they might frequently change off, on that most terribly wearing business of leading and plowing a track; and that they should try the left this time, hoping to find there more possible snow, and to force their way to the Ridge. Once the path was made, it could be followed with loads, and the next camp established.

... It was not early the next morning, when at last the sun struck the tent roofs in the shadow of the bergschrund, and turned their gray-brown to yellow. Like torpid insects, warmed to life by its rays after the long chill of night, the men began to stir, and talk a little, and think about getting up, and cooking breakfast.

But somehow it seemed even harder than on the day before, to pull oneself out of the sleeping bag.

Nobody moved for a long period. Within each one was a battleground, between the inertia of fatigue and altitude, and the need to push on. Herron felt most strongly the pressure of the days. One by one, they were passing, the days of good weather, and the Expedition was not getting forward. The desire in him to get on, to get every day a little nearer and nearer the summit, was like something burning, something uncontrollable, that would not leave him in peace.—It would be so much pleasanter to lie in the sleeping bag till mid-morning, or noon, to take time off after the exertions of yesterday. But that thought of the summit would not let one. It pulled and drove, so that while one longed to rest, one could not rest, till something, however little, was accomplished, till the gnawing hunger of desire was, for that day, appeased. It was real pain—the conflict between the overtired body and will, and that driving, irrepressible urge of the mountain, that would not let one alone, that somehow was stronger than all the rest.

Relief came only when the mountain won, and Herron was up and cooking breakfast. Bechtold was up too, and ready to go after eating. Simon was not yet even fully awake. Merkl was still having trouble with his foot, which

## *Crescendo—and Diminuendo*

---

he had frozen on the way to Camp Six, and felt that he must save it. Moreover, if they waited till tomorrow, Wiessner would have arrived with coolies. Then the sahibs could still break trail, and the coolies could follow carrying loads, so two climbers could spend the night on the Ridge, just as originally hoped.

But Herron still felt that pull of the unseen summit that waited, that pressure of the days that passed and passed, with nothing of accomplishment in them. He and Bechtold started up. They had not gone far, when Bechtold found himself too much exhausted, and turned back. Herron kept on.

Here to the left the snow was less soft, perfectly possible going. Of course it was not entirely sensible to be climbing like this, alone. But it was good to be going forward again. Slowly, strongly plodding, step by powerful step, through snow never above his knees, he mounted higher and higher. Though on other Himalayan mountains, in the higher altitudes, knee-deep snow has been thought next door to impassable, here it came as a great relief.

He reached a crevasse. This was not so desirable a thing to cross without a rope; he stopped to look it over, and find a safe place. He glanced back down the way he had come, enjoying the height already gained. There, toiling slowly after him came Simon, "the *Chota Sahib*" (the Little Sahib), with a coiled rope hanging like a necklace around his neck. Herron most gratefully waited.

"I thought you ought not to be here alone," explained Simon. They tied together and went on.

They were getting perceptibly higher. When they stopped to gaze around, they saw that the biggest Chongra Peak, which had towered high in the sky over the base

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

camp, was now apparently below them. Even the crest of the Ridge itself began to look near. They crossed another crevasse. Above it the slope steepened greatly. Here the snow was getting soft again: very quickly they were deeply in it. Herron floundered forward. The effort needed was terrific. It seemed to be becoming actually bottomless. He realized for the first time how desperately tired he was from the previous days. Just conceivably, fresh men might do something with it: *he* could not.

The top of the Ridge appeared to be just over the skyline. It was heart-breaking to think of turning back, now. The men looked toward the left, to the precipitous frozen snow close to the rocks of Rakiot Peak. They made their way over, and started up this. It proved to be so hard and steep that step-cutting would be necessary.

They studied the rise of this slope, and the even greater difficulties ahead. It had seemed impossible to turn back. To go on was even more impossible: it would be sheer madness. They returned to Camp Six.

### xii

Meanwhile, Wiessner had arrived there with two coolies. There would be no chance of their carrying loads the following day, however. One was so mountain-sick that he did nothing but lie and groan, and the other refused to budge a step without his companion. Therefore, it was now decided that all the sahibs should go on without coolies, next day—the third day now of the attack on the Mulde and the push toward the Ridge—and see if it were possible to break a trail through that bottomless-seeming place, and reach the crest beyond. Then, if this could be done, two sahibs would go up the track the day after,

## *Crescendo—and Diminuendo*

---

carrying loads, and make the next camp. If not—well, no use in borrowing trouble.

This morning Herron and Simon had both wakened with viciously sore and inflamed throats, a combination of altitude and exhaustion. One of the climbers volunteered the information that if they did not go down and rest, the throats might well become ulcerated; he had had a friend who had been affected that way. Then they would be no use for the final push.

So today they had come back to Camp Four.

### xiii

All the morning of this third day we had been watching with the glasses the white amphitheater of the Mulde. In mid-morning we had seen three little black dots creeping up, not far above the larger black dot that was the tent at Camp Six. For a while we had lost them in the sun dazzle. We caught them again, later and higher. Again they were lost, out of sight behind some curve of the contour, at about the height where we had seen the two dots the day before, the place of the bottomless snow.

We watched, and watched. . . . We turned our eyes away for a time, hoping to tempt something to happen. . . . We looked again. . . . Finally we had another glimpse. We had been fixing our eyes too low. There the black dots were, just vanishing over the skyline, at the crest of the Ridge!

Later we saw them coming down. And next day two bulkier dots, moving slowly, crawled up, and by late afternoon disappeared over the rim of the Ridge. They did not return. So we knew that the four days' push had succeeded. Camp Seven had been established. . . .

They had not been easy, those two days. The three men had climbed without trouble as far as Herron and Simon had gone. Scarcely yet tired, they had reached that feathery bottomless morass. Where Herron had plowed into it, they found his tracks already almost drifted over by sliding snow. This powdery stuff in the steep Mulde proved to be often lightly moving. Wiessner, who had an unusual knowledge of the meaning of snow surfaces, gained in many winters of skiing, thought that some three hundred feet up to the right the going appeared moderately easy again. The Ridge was waiting beyond, and all the work of reconnaissance had seemed to show conclusively that to it there was no other better way. This obstacle forced, it was as good as won. He made the attempt.

Half-crawling on hands and knees, half-swimming up the steepness, he fought a slow and panting way over the depths of powder. With traffic his route would gradually pack down into a trench, with fairly solid bottom. But to advance now meant hard work, and plenty of it. And continually the uncertainty as to how long it might go on. One could not keep this sort of thing up indefinitely. His judgment proved right, however. After about three hundred feet, the snow began to feel more solid. Beyond, it was only a straight march in knee-deep snow up to the Ridge.

They topped it. They looked over the other side. They saw what Kunigk and Aschenbrenner had described, what they had been picturing in their minds and thoughts and hopes for so many days—the great horseshoe of the south face, the almost perpendicular walls dropping into the far blue haze of Rupal Nullah, and the snow promenade

## *Crescendo—and Diminuendo*

---

around the horseshoe to that little snow pyramid of the summit. From now on, the grinding up flat slopes would be over. The route lay by easy ridges, along the top of the world.

Bechtold grew almost lyrical, before the drama of the location of the Summit Peak—that tiny point perched on the jutting end of the horseshoe, with its white profile raised against the sky, above the snowy rocks that plunged into those unimaginable fourteen-thousand-foot blue depths. When he tried to describe it afterward, he had no words. It was unbelievable,—tremendous and striking beyond anything he had ever seen or imagined,—that was all he could do with it.

### xv

Through the day the sick coolie had lain groaning at Camp Six: it was not a cheerful place to return to. One man must stay there next day, to receive the expected support party, and then to go up with this party. They drew lots. Wiessner was the unlucky one.

On the afternoon of July 30th, Merkl and Bechtold, carrying a small, light tent, a sleeping bag, cooking things, and provisions, started to climb the now well-trodden route to the Ridge.

They arrived in the late afternoon, and seeking a spot sheltered from any storms that might sweep over the heights, they pitched their tent on a solid snowbridge, deep inside a crevasse. They had found carrying loads at this altitude very exhausting. They were too tired to eat. The day was over, and they slept.

—All summer one would remind the other of that delicious sleep, “They talk of the difficulty of resting at high

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

altitudes. Did you ever have a better night in your life than the one we spent at 23,000 feet on Rakiot Ridge!"...

### xvi

So night of the fourth day came on the mountain, with the sunset, and the stars—the fourth day since the men had gone into the Mulde. The high and solemn beauty of the snow world could no longer penetrate into the little closed circle of concentrated emotion where the climbers were living, the circle bounded all round by the one fixed purpose—the ascent of the mountain. Our mental outlook was now focused within as small a space as our physical was, when our tent flaps were shut even earlier than usual, after four exhausting days—snapped together, before sunset, without a thought—shut in the face of beauty, and the changes of day and night. There was no room in life now for that sort of thing. At that critical moment of the summer, living for most of us was stripped bare of everything else, of all the ordinary range of interests and desires; so that, without any distraction, all the vital force in us went to feed the one essential flame. Closed into our little tents, at Camp Four, at Camp Six, and there on the heights at Camp Seven, we were all within the same circle of interest. Within it, there was room now for only one feeling—relief, and a sort of peace.

At last, Camp Seven was established. The Ridge was won.

### xvii

The plan had been, to set up Camp Seven, to get plenty of provisions up, with coolies, as rapidly as possible, and then to use it for a sort of highest base camp, from which

## *Crescendo—and Diminuendo*

---

to erect the later camps, and make the final push for the summit.

There were great differences of opinion as to the number of days that would be required, above Camp Seven. It was planned not to make any permanent camp, with tents and stores, beyond one in the saddle between the Northeast Peaks. But whether this could be reached in a day, along the Ridge from the present location of Camp Seven, or whether one more camp must be made between, or whether, as a third alternative, it would be better to move Camp Seven farther up the Ridge, increasing its distance from Camp Six, was an unsettled question. From the camp in the saddle, the two or three men still fit were to push on as a self-contained unit, with a light tent, sleeping bags, stove and provisions, bivouacking at night, but making no more permanent camps. For this last stretch, of a mile or two along gentle snow slopes, apparently offering no technical difficulties, but perhaps with deep, soft snow, or troubles not yet visible, and always with an altitude of over 25,000 feet to fight, estimates as to the time needed differed widely. The most optimistic thought that the trip might turn out to be a day's dash, with a return to the saddle camp the same night. The gloomiest prophets allowed three days from the saddle camp to the summit, and a day back.

It was hoped that Lieutenant Frier, who was leaving the base camp with coolies July 27th or 28th, would arrive at Camp Six soon enough and with enough porters to get more tents to Camp Seven, and to stock it well with provisions, during this present period. Then the climbers would return to Camp Four for a rest day or two, and so up again, with more coolies and provisions, to carry through the final push to the summit.

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

This had been the plan of attack, the feeling being all in favor of moving slow and sure, with plenty of provisions, plenty of coolies, and the climbers in the best possible physical condition, before starting the decisive final push.

### XVIII

Leaving their tent and stores, Merkl and Bechtold came back to Camp Six. But Frier and his porters had not appeared; and the sick Hunza, who had now spent two days in this fearful spot, groaned worse than ever. There was no hope of any help in load-carrying from him and his companion. Camp Six had been a dreary place for Wiessner, waiting there all day, with the coolie groaning.

The weather was now beginning to look threatening, as a wind swept down the Mulde, and scuds of snow. Between Camp Six and Camp Five, a very little new snow would quite prevent traveling for several days; a long storm might keep the climbers trapped indefinitely, with now no superfluity of provisions or fuel. For the way among the seracs and crevasses was sufficiently uncertain, at best. The going down would take extreme care to negotiate safely—moving cautiously down steps nicked by the ice-axe, along almost perpendicular ice walls, or on narrow crumbling ledges among the blue chasms of ice. Under a treacherous covering of new snow, it would be to the last degree dangerous. And this part of the route should be passed swiftly, as well as carefully, with the threat of breaking seracs. It would not be a good thing to be caught by a storm anywhere above Camp Five.

It was decided that all the men should return to Camp Four—to come back later, rested and with reënforcements of coolies.



## xix

Wiessner was returning to Camp Five with his groaning coolie, so sick that he had to be dragged and slid down the snow. It was in the broken-up area. Wiessner was coming last down a steep ice slope, that dropped away indefinitely into crevasses. The well coolie was seated below, supposedly solidly placed and with his ice-axe firmly planted in the snow, to act as an anchor. Wiessner, arriving, lightly brushed his shoulder. Off slid the coolie down the mountain, dragging the sick coolie and Wiessner on the rope after him. Wiessner just managed with his right hand to bury his ice-axe in a patch of hard snow, and stop his own fall. He checked the two sliding coolies for a moment on his left arm. Then he braced his whole body firm against the pull, and held them. It was a close thing for all.

## xx

At Camp Five, the men found Lieutenant Frier, on his way up with porters. But they had been all taken sick there, and were of no use. Lieutenant Frier turned round with them, and the whole group came down.

This attack was over, and the climbers were back in Camp Four again. They hoped to be off the next day, or the day after. But delay was to pile on delay, one thing after another would hold them back. From the time that they had first come up, in early July, until the end of the summer, it would be altogether many weeks that they lived and waited at Camp Four.

---

*Chapter XVI*

## AT CAMP FOUR

## I

“.... And still it was, in many ways, a grand time. I thought I would get tired of perpetual snow and ice and tents for so long a time, but it was not the case.... I wouldn’t mind beginning the whole thing right over again now, if it could be done... Even to lie in a tent waiting for it to stop snowing wasn’t so bad. It was comfortable all right, certainly more than sitting at a formal dinner in stiff dinner jacket ... and it was full of little quite agreeable pastimes and things to do.” \*

## II

My particular introduction to Camp Four was by the ice cave.

—Evening in the ice cave. From the twilight outside, one slides down its steep entrance into cold darkness. Inside the doorway is the regulation square space, just big enough to stand in, crouching. One lights a candle, and sets it on the sleeping platform, which surrounds on three sides the little standing place. In the light of the dancing flame, the curving walls and roof, formerly snow, but now coated with ice from many daytime meltings, gleam and glitter all around, and one is enclosed in a fairy grotto of whiteness.

\* From a letter of R. H.



“... THE NEARBY SERACS HAD BEGUN TO SEEM LIKE HOME. . . .  
WE WOULD FINISH SUPPER LOOKING AT THE SUNSET”



## *At Camp Four*

---

When the cave was first built, and was still soft snow, every incautious movement brought showers from the roof down one's neck. Then it was by candlelight a mica-powdered Christmas card, but not so easy to live in. Now, I slide my sleeping bag into position, on a shelf of slippery glaze, and slide myself up and into it. The roof is less than three feet above me, but slipping my head along its glassy surface exacts no penalties. My boots stand beside my head, my coat makes a pillow, and I insert myself into the bag, panting a bit with the physical effort of wriggling down into it. That is the regular nightly toll which an altitude of over 19,000 feet exacts from every one, and soon becomes a commonplace. Looking around my gleaming candlelit cavern, I find it a charming and romantic place to sleep in.

—Morning in the ice cave. A cold gloomy twilight filters down the little square of the doorway, with a tiny glimpse of deep blue sky, far through the tunneled entrance. A bright day, apparently, outside. But none of the sun's heat penetrates. There is the same stale chill that has been there all night. I lie on the large icy shelf, close under the low icy ceiling; and I feel as livid and congealed as a fish at a fish market, laid out on a slab of ice.

A shadow blocks the doorway, two big feet come sliding down the steep entrance into the cave, a body stoops, and a face appears. A cheerful dark face—Ramana, Nanga Parbat cook.

*“Khana idhur?”* No, no breakfast here, in this grim foretaste of the tomb.

After this waking, I do not wonder that the ice cave has been given up as sleeping quarters, except in time of great overcrowding. I am glad that a tent is to be vacant that day.

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

### III

Out into the sun, the blazing sun on snow. Even at eight or nine o'clock, dark snow goggles go on quickly, and glacial cream to protect the skin of the face. Glaring light in every direction—pouring down in floods from the blue sky, pouring up even brighter from the dazzling whiteness of the snow, that covers the world. Cruel, blinding light, even with snow glasses, and burning, dizzying heat.

In July, especially, one soon learned to stay safe in one's tent and not go far in the open, near to noon. Otherwise, it struck one like a blow—the light and heat—bringing discomfort to the strongest, and to the weaker, headaches, nausea, and dizziness. But let a cloud drift for only a moment over the sun, and the heat was turned off suddenly as if by a button; one shivered in the cold of snowy altitude. A thermometer laid on the snow about noon, and moved from shade to sun, and back again, varied from 40° F. in shadow to 104° F. in sunshine.

That was the first thing one noticed about life at Camp Four—the temperature extremes, and how they governed the daily routine. The evening meal by common consent was at an early hour. As the sun began to get low in the sky, some one would shout from the tents, "Ramana." And out of the ice cave kitchen would pop a cheerful face,—"Sahib?"

"*Khana* (Food)."

"*Khana* ready, sahib!" So we would finish supper about six or a little after, sitting in our tents looking down at the golden sunset, above the plum-colored mountains that bound the Indus Valley, and the farther purples and blues of the Hindu Kush. Already the warmth would be going fast; and the cold of night would be beginning to settle

## *At Camp Four*

---

down from interstellar space, on the high-lifted snows of the mountain. Then one sought refuge quickly in one's sleeping bag, after snapping one's tent as airtight as it could be made; and so, for a little physical comfort, forewent all the solemn beauty of the twilight, and the slow coming of the stars.

In July, the hot month, when we often slept so warm that we partially undressed in our bags, the thermometer registered 18° F., in spite of all our animal heat, inside the almost air-tight tents. By August it began to be really cold. At night the thermometer sometimes showed -15° F. in the tent. And the drinking water, which froze solid in my cup overnight, never showed any signs of melting all day.

Only once did I taste the night cold outside. We had been playing games all together in one tent after supper, and did not leave until the incredibly late hour of ten o'clock. We stepped out into the moonlight. Like liquid cold, it poured down upon us, over the saddle to the left of Rakiot Spur, flooding the whole slope of the plateau,—that reflected it almost as water reflects light, sparkling in a sheet of tiny diamonds. The farther snowfields gleamed under it, and the great peaks rose spectral white, in lonely magnificence.

In the daytime, the comparatively level immediate snow, and the strange shapes of near-by seracs and ice-cliffs, had begun to look almost like home; the peaks of the Nanga Parbat massif were our own back yard to exercise in; and the stretch of distant ranges, seen over the nearer foothills ten or fifteen thousand feet below, was just our private view. But now, the mountains had withdrawn themselves from their temporary connection with our plans and ambitions. We were only tiny, forgotten interlopers. Huge, beautiful presences, they stood under the moon, in solemn

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

communion with one another, with the night, and the stars. . . . We looked, and shivered, chilled by more than physical cold.

Though there was enough of that, too. Sharp, keen, cutting like a silver knife. I would have been interested to see a thermometer then. All I know is that in less than three minutes outside, one of my feet—well-protected as always with heavy waterproof boots, lamb's-wool inner soles, and several pairs of socks—became completely numb. It took some moments of vigorous rubbing in the tent, to restore feeling.

### IV

Life on the snow proved to have both inconveniences and conveniences.

One of the most obvious of the first was, of course, lack of water. That particular lack was not felt quite so forcibly at Camp Four as in the other high camps, for here there was a Ramana. The melting of snow for water, that long and laborious process, was done for us. The only need was to see that the snow was taken from a sufficiently far-away and clean spot. The snow of the roof of the cave-kitchen, impregnated with benzine smoke, or that by the entrance, full of dirt, lint, and even bits of food, were only too convenient and tempting to Ramana: the feeling for cleanliness and sanitation of a Kashmiri coolie is, of course, not highly developed. But always there was water, ready for cooking and drinking, even though sometimes it was a little highly flavored.

As for water for washing—personal washing was simply not done at Camp Four, unless perhaps one spared a little drinking water to dribble over one's fingers. But thanks to the extreme cold and dryness of the altitude, washing,

## *At Camp Four*

---

though it was eagerly anticipated as one of the many pleasures of a return to the base camp, was really only a delightful luxury, and not at all a necessity. When it came to the washing of utensils—dishes, knives, etc.—then one enjoyed the conveniences of the situation. Though there was no water, there was snow, everywhere. A knife plunged into a half-frozen drift just outside the door, came out clean; for a dish one reached out a hand and grabbed a fistful of snow and rubbed it around in it; if moved to clean one's teeth, one need only seize a toothbrush, at any place, at any moment of the day: the moisture was always ready.

So much for living on snow. As for sleeping on snow, it must be admitted that it had few advantages. It was always extremely cold underneath. The icy chill struck up, even through the rubber tent floor, spongy rubber mat, and waterproof-covered down sleeping bag. And it did not make a soft mattress. After the first night, it packed down, and froze solid in ice under one. Yet still it managed to melt imperceptibly from body heat, enough so that every night the hole in which one slept grew deeper, and gradually other grotesque bumps and holes and slopes developed. Often the trouble would take the form of a deepening hollow in the middle of the tent, that rose to high plateaus on the two sides, from which in the relaxed unconsciousness of sleep, both neighbors would roll down their respective hillsides, to spend the rest of the night piled up uncomfortably together in the valley between. Sometimes it would more pleasingly become two troughlike depressions divided by a high ridge, holes in which, as they deepened, the two sleepers would lie as rigidly held as in the clasp of the Iron Maiden. Whichever tendency developed, the taking up of tents every once in so often, to smooth the area underneath, became an inevitable part of camp rou-

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

tine. Though certainly they would never rate as a major hardship, yet the growing irregularities of one's nightly couch were one of the minor discomforts, to balance against the problematical romance of sleeping on snow.

Another of those little things that are proverbially agreed to count in life, was that one could never spend a night with the top of one's sleeping bag cuddled warm and close around one's cheek and chin. The night might start that way, certainly, but long before morning the moisture of one's breath would have formed all along the edge of one's bag a thin crackling coating of ice, which quite completely annihilated the effect of comfort desired.

### v

So much for the mechanics of living. What were the occupations of the long days?

Aside from business directly connected with the progress of the Expedition, which went on the same as at the base camp—the unpacking of loads from below, and making up of those to go higher on the mountain, the arrival of coolies with mail, and answering of business letters—the main interest and occupation was, of course, eating. One woke perhaps about seven, stared at the tent roof, yellow with sun, and hoped that things would soon warm up a little, inside. When they had—it might be anywhere between half past seven and ten—one stuck out a head.

“Porridge, Ramana.” And porridge came—sooner or later, as the case might be—also tea or cocoa, and sometimes a little ham, or meat-stew, or apricots, left from the night before.

Along toward the middle of the day, the first one to get hungry would again shout for Ramana, and he would come

## *At Camp Four*

---

to serve the group, generally gathered together in one or two tents by that time. Soup, canned beef or boiled ham, rice or macaroni, stewed prunes or apricots or jam, was the general menu of the noon and evening meals. Occasionally, after the arrival of provisions from the base camp, there would be a little variety: cheese, or sago pudding, or a leg of lamb; sometimes, even potatoes, sent by our invaluable friend, Pandith Dina Nath Durbari, Postmaster at Astor; and once, more beautiful and soul-satisfying than the rarest jewels, six small turnips. And sometimes amateur cooks tried their hand, notably Wiessner, who achieved some very creditable jam pancakes.

But what our meals lacked in elegance, in variety, and in delicacy of tableware—an enamel cup and soup plate, a spoon apiece, and one's personal pocket knife—they made up for in service. For Ramana looked after us assiduously, taking dishes away between courses to 'wash' them in the snow; and when there were coolies in camp, at least two always acted as butler's assistants. When Ramana brought the big *dekkshi* of stew for us to help ourselves, they would follow him, their dark faces very serious, one bearing the coffee, the other, the milk and sugar. I have seldom had more painstaking service than from these hillmen coolies, who had probably never seen white men's food or dishes before.

While as for Ramana!—

## VI

Ramana certainly deserves a section to himself,—Ramana, whose smiling black visage popped in and out of our days,—Ramana, "Nanga Parbat Cook."

"Nanga Parbat cook" he had said he would be, back in

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

the long-ago time at Astor, and Nanga Parbat cook he certainly was! For a month and a half, he stayed at Camp Four, sleeping in a bundle of old clothes and blankets among the food on the shelf of the ice-cave kitchen, and working most of the day over the two-burner Primus stove, melting water and cooking. His broad face was always cheerful, always grinning, framed in the small circle of a gray knitted aviator's helmet we had given him, which he fondly called "Nanga Parbat hat" and wore pulled down, whatever the temperature; so that we saw only a small fragment of features—eyes, nose, mustache, and portions of a wide smile. He grinned, even when he came one morning to report to us, cheerily, "Ramana finish!" and we finally gathered that a corner of his cave had fallen in on his feet in the night.

"Ramana," any one would shout who wanted anything to eat or drink, at any hour of the day; and out he would pop like a rabbit from his burrow.

"Sahib!"

I often thought that he preferred the days when there was much coming and going, and much call for his services, and was bored when there were only one or two climbers in camp.

He liked appreciation. "*Attcha?* (Good?)" he would ask, when serving a dish of stew, and would beam at the chorus, "*Attcha! attcha! Ramana!*" But he was very generous. If a dish was approved that I had taken a hand in, he made sure I should have my share of the credit.

"MISS SAHIB, Ramana," he would explain, grinning delightedly.

He had his faults, of course. At first he was as careless as the grandest New York chef about throwing away remnants.

## *At Camp Four*

---

“*Kidhur?* (where)—?” I would inquire, about this or that, which had been left from a previous meal.

And “*Baraf,* (In the snow),” he would answer with a cheerful sweeping gesture. He soon learned better than that, however.—He was not always prompt or speedy, and I have known cleaner and more skillful cooks. But he never failed to be cheerful and willing. And, after all, waiting for Ramana to bring some long-ago ordered food was a real occupation, to help pass the days.

### VII

But that was not the only pastime for the desultory hours, as we sat or lay about in our tents: neither the heat of the sun nor the cold days of storm tempted us outdoors. There was reading—German and English periodicals sent by our friends. Sometimes for hours the Germans would sing together, climbing or folk songs.

A favorite diversion for snowy days was the alphabet game. This proved especially appropriate for a group in which one person, Lieutenant Frier, spoke only English, and one, Merkl, only German. A letter would be chosen, and then each one around the circle must give a name beginning with that letter. At one time we would play it with famous men, at another with mountains, or cities, lakes, or islands.

Sharp individual differences of interest among our group began to show for the first time, in this game. Everyone had his own specialties, in famous men. Merkl's were engineers and important heads of industries. Wiessner ran to the less-known German artists. Herron, although he ranged rather widely over the art, music, philosophy and literature of several countries, came in especially strong on minor

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

Greek philosophers. This was a continual bone of contention, as the rest of us felt that his complete monopoly of this field gave him an unfair advantage. Day after day discussion raged hot and heavy, back and forth, about Herron's philosophers. Occasionally strained nerves would show through, and its humorous tone degenerate into the contentious.

Frier's contributions were likely to be fictitious or amusing. On the S's, when we had been the rounds with Shakespeare and Schiller, Shelley and Schopenhauer, Frier brought out very proudly "S——!" maker of our eternal and much-disliked powdered soups. Frier's "famous man" was remembered with pleasure thereafter, at every meal-time.

In conversation, two subjects were perennial favorites—food, and climbing in the Kaisergebirge. Hour after hour, we could talk about food: food we had eaten, food we hoped to eat; restaurants in Berlin, or in Rome, or in New York; food in our own homes. There was a fascination in discussing food, beyond the gnawing hunger that kept it always before our minds. It seemed also to stand for all the gentleness and the gracious amenities of civilized living. And in the same way, the talk of the Kaisergebirge was talk of home. Every route was affectionately known, and every hut, and the days of good climbing and nights of beer-drinking and singing were reviewed and anticipated. It served to link this life up with the rest of life.

Very rarely, however, did we speak seriously about things in general. Rarely did we drift into any exchange of opinion on important subjects, any expression of personal tastes or feelings. Mind, spirit, and emotions, we were too completely engrossed with the mountain; only the surface part of us was left for our relations with one another.

## At Camp Four

---

### VIII

We had come here into a naked place, quite bare of the many sensory interests of ordinary surroundings. We had brought with us none of the toys of civilization, which mountaineers and explorers nowadays generally take for their unemployed hours,—cards, phonographs, wireless. But we had yet with us one plaything—the simplest and most primary—ourselves.

Personal appearance is a matter that can still occupy and amuse, even at almost 20,000 feet in the snow. If any one doubt this, let him be present at Camp Four, when the men are looking at their beards.

It is a day of long storm. We all lie about on the sleeping bags in one of the tents. The tent is tightly snapped together, to keep the snow out and all our animal heat in. Our nailed boots are off and pushed in corners, or in heaps by the tent door. Our stockinginged feet are wriggled up under one another's legs or the edges of sleeping bags, for warmth. Lieutenant Frier is wrapped in his chogga, a picturesque native cloak, hand woven and embroidered. I am wearing my sheepskin-lined, puttoo-cloth coat. Merkl, Herron, and Wiessner have on only their heavy Expedition suits.

Wiessner is devouring Frier's month-old *Weekly Times*. The rest are gazing idly into space. Merkl takes out a small pocket glass, and begins neatly to comb and arrange his beard. And the game is on.

Every one reaches for the glass. Frier wins.

"Funny, how much redder my beard is than my hair," he says, with interest.

"Yours is the thickest of anybody's," I contribute.

"How beautifully it curls," teases Wiessner. Frier combs the side-whiskers straight out, till they make a huge square

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

frame for his jaw. It is generally agreed that that gives a most striking and becoming effect.

It is Wiessner's turn next with the mirror.

"You look just like Admiral von Tirpitz," jokes Merkl. Wiessner combs the two points of his beard to the sides, to emphasize the effect.

"Wait a minute," laugh Frier, and pulls out some nail scissors, and clips it down the middle of the chin.

"There, now you're perfect," shouts every one, and Wiessner cocks his head and grins back at us.

Herron seizes the glass. "My beard is all different colors!" he boasts of his discovery, for just under the lower lip among the black is a tuft of chestnut.

"Come here," says Frier. He has become recognized as the barber of the Expedition, so skillful is he. He trims and clips, draws back to study the effect, and the others give suggestions— "A little more off, there." "Cut it a little shorter here." Different lines are tried, different sorts of combing. Every one offers an opinion.

Then some one else takes back the glass. And the game goes merrily round and round, while outside the snow falls on the white flanks of Nanga Parbat.

### IX

So our lives went on, as day after day we were held in Camp Four. Games and songs and reading, suspense and boredom. On the surface it appeared to be a fairly normal existence, such as in a time of waiting one might have anywhere. Yet not too normal, really, it would seem. Else why did we hark back so persistently to memories of the Kaisergebirge? And why did we pore so over the pages of the London *Weekly Times*? Why did it seem so com-

## *At Camp Four*

---

pletely incredible to read there of international conferences, of tennis tournaments, of country houses for rent, of sales of summer dresses? Why was it almost beyond the power of the imagination to grasp, that over the mountains and beyond the sea, such a life was still going on? How multicolored and various it all looked from here, what a network of easy conventions and gay trivialities, bright with the comfortable charm of the familiar.

One had not felt that way at the base camp. Actually, at the base camp, we had seemed nearer to Europe and the normal daily affairs of Europe, than we seemed here to the base camp. Here the world was strange, and we were intruders. Beautiful though some of us might find it, and satisfying to the spirit, still we had cut ourselves off from the life and surroundings of humanity on the earth. We had left the place where we belonged.

---

## *Chapter XVII*

### EPISODE—ABOVE 20,000 FEET

#### I

##### *From the Roof of the World \**

**A**LONE, in a minute tent,  
High on the side of the immense mountain  
For three days now among the clouds  
And the snow that keeps incessantly falling,  
Alone here lies your friend.  
Stretched out on his back he lies,  
In the tent, a little point lost in the confused uniform  
whiteness  
Of the clouds, and the enormous piled-up walls of ice.  
He lies all day and all night.  
He prepares something to eat,  
Or reads the labels on the cans of Ovomaltine.  
He would like to sleep until the sun comes.  
But he has slept too much already.  
Stretched out on his back, he stares at the subtle crossings  
of the brown translucent material over him.  
And for three days now,  
Thus,  
He lies waiting for the sun to come. . . .

*R. H., Camp Five, August 8, 1932.*

\* Literally translated from the Italian. See Appendix E, page 321.

It happened during the long storm.

Three days before, the storm had started, holding the climbers in Camp Four. The coolies had just arrived; everything was ready to go on. Impatiently we lay in our tents, waiting for clearing weather that did not come. The snow fell and fell, stopped a little, then fell again.

One of the men, whose name I suppress by request, since he realized afterward what a foolish thing he had done, was feeling rather excessively fit for such a passive life. Inaction was wearing on him: he chafed impatiently to be up and at it. One afternoon he strolled a little way up the snowy plateau that rose gently behind Camp Four. This was the one place on the mountain that was entirely safe for solitary exercise, being the one place free from crevasses. The snow was not deep under foot, and it proved a warm and gentle storm, small flakes falling quietly almost without wind. He had a very pleasant walk.

He thought of Herron, sitting out the storm alone up at Camp Five. He and Simon had started ahead as advance guard for the final push, and Simon had come back to Camp Four with a toothache just before the snow began. After two or three days of that isolation, Herron should be more than glad of a caller. Why not wander up there the next morning, as a good excuse for a walk? In ordinary weather the round trip took only three or four hours. But he would allow plenty of time. He would carry a lunch, and plan to make a day of it.

He woke next morning with a feeling of pleased anticipation of the little outing. It would be an interesting break in the monotony.

But as he stepped out of his tent after breakfast, his

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

enthusiasm rather cooled. The snow still fell, as warm and as gently as ever; but now the clouds had settled down upon the camp. One could hardly see fifty feet in any direction.

The route to Camp Five went first up the plateau; then climbed for a short way, straight and speedily, up the long spur of Rakiot Peak; afterward turning at right angles to follow a broad horizontal shelf along the side of the spur, to where the camp lay, directly below the Peak. If one got too far to the right or the left, when aiming for the foot of the spur, one would find oneself in the midst of crevasses. How in this white fog could he even hit the mountain?

But as he halted dubiously, the cloud drifted and thinned, so that just for a moment some dark rocks showed through. With a glimpse like that once in a while, he should be able to steer a straight course. And once on the spur, he need only follow the shelf, which was clearly bounded on both sides—below by a crevasse, above, by a bergschrund. So into his pocket went some cold ham, a chappati and a few prunes, and with many jokes from the others, who bet that he would not get a hundred feet from the camp, he was off.

### III

It was a discouragingly slow business, up the plateau. At first he followed the gentle rise of the slope, but soon it became deceptively rolling. To hold his direction he must stop frequently, and wait, and strain his eyes, until the cloud thinned, and just a little darkening somewhere in the general white fogginess ahead indicated the spur. Then on, continually watching his back track, to keep a



ON THE WAY TO CAMP FIVE—THE KARAKORUMS IN THE DISTANCE



## *Episode—Above 20,000 Feet*

---

fairly straight line. Even that dark streak of footprints behind vanished soon into the white cloud. Moving through it was like being blind—a white blindness.

Sometimes he must stand for fifteen or twenty minutes, waiting for a glimpse ahead, to take new bearings. Time was passing fast. He knew it would be sensible to turn back, for this was a boring game. . . . But it was hard to give up so easily.

“I’ll just see if I can get to the spur,” he told himself. At last in the white mist the snow under his feet was rising very steeply.

“Now I’ve found the spur, the rest will be simple,” he thought. One more wait, to locate on the slope above him the one place where the main crevasse was covered over and could be crossed; and then up.

On this extreme steepness, altitude began to tell. In spite of the very slow gait, with a pause between every two steps, which habit had already taught him at these heights, he must stop often to pant a little. And the soft snow became deeper and deeper. On the plateau it had been about a foot. Now he was plowing through it up to his knees. As he climbed higher, he sank in more and more, fighting and struggling upward in soft, feathery powder—to his thighs, to his hips, then, literally, to his waist. This was what the men had met in the Mulde, but never on this part of the route before. Now he was in to his waist, it was again a sort of swimming, swimming not on a watery plain, but up a fiercely steep slope in a breathless altitude. At every step he would push his leg on and up, perhaps a foot, and slip back three-quarters of it, so that he gained height almost by inches. And there was a very long pause for panting and gasping, after every struggling step, now.

In the midst of his efforts, he noticed that he was just

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

over the covered crevasse, and wondered, with a certain mild interest, whether, with all this deep floundering, he might break through into it. But he was working far too hard to give this thought much attention.

Here, too, he should probably have turned back. But how can one turn back in the middle of a fight? It was in fact rather refreshing to be working again, after so long lying supine. And surely this must be a very local condition. It would get normal soon.

When he reached the place where one turned to follow the spur horizontally, it did improve. But he saw by his watch that he had used about an hour and a half, to win up the last hundred yards. It was after three o'clock. Now surely, however, it would be like the plateau, easy going, ahead. . . . He kept on.

The snow, although better, was not too good—just above the knees now. And he found himself tired from that earlier struggle. He was probably not in as fit condition as he had thought, after the days of inaction. Twenty-five slow plowing steps—then sit, and rest, and pant—then twenty-five more. The rests grew longer. At first, half a minute—now they were creeping up to two or three minutes. When would he ever get to Camp Five, at this rate?

As the day went by, the cloud was becoming thicker and thicker. Nearby seracs loomed up in it, strange shapes in the mist. Beyond them, nothing but a muffling white veil. And now the route was not looking at all right. He did not see how he could really be off it, because of the two boundary crevasses, but nothing about it appeared familiar. He had no idea, even, how far he had come.

Twenty-five steps, carefully counted, then stop, gasping—twenty-five, then stop. He would not let himself halt sooner, no matter how much he panted. Sometimes for two or three

## *Episode—Above 20,000 Feet*

---

of the twenty-five the snow would be comparatively hard, only halfway up the shins. This was an unspeakably blessed relief. . . .

Twenty-five, and a long pause . . . twenty-five, and a long pause. . . .

His watch now showed five o'clock. The thick whiteness was beginning to turn a little gray. By six it would be quite dark. And what then? Because of his unusually laborious progress, he had not the least idea how far he had come. A night on the mountain would be pretty inevitably the end of things. If he stayed still—freezing; if he kept moving—a crevasse. By a series of acts, no one of which had seemed especially foolish, he had reached a very foolish position. It would be a stupid and a lonely way to end.

Meanwhile he kept on. . . . At half-past five, the grayness was deepening; the snow was falling thicker and thicker; and the night-chill, for which he was unprepared, having traveled light in the heat, was beginning to strike grimly through his clothing.

Then gradually, through the dim, eerie twilight, the looming upper wall of a great bergschrund took shape across the way ahead. And on the other side, far below to the right, a tiny tent. . . . Camp Five!

Shelter, companionship, safety, after the infinite loneliness of the mountain. So that was that.

## IV

The other men had warned him in humorous style that he never could find his way without directions across this bergschrund, for the old snowbridge had broken, and the new route was blind at the start, and wound about in an odd and unexpected manner.

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

“You must shout for Herron to come out and show you,” they had said. Now, peering through the snowflakes and not seeing any obvious way, he shouted. An answering hail came from the tent.

“Won’t Herron be surprised and pleased to have some company at last,” thought the climber. But there was a surprise in store for him, too. For when the tall figure emerged from the little tent, the tone of its greeting was not very cordial.

“Are you crazy?” shouted Herron.

“Yes,” answered his friend cheerfully, for by this time he had decided he was.

The crossing of the snowbridge over the bergschrund was a bad moment for Herron, for he was as cautious for the safety of others as he was inclined to be oblivious of his own.

“For heaven’s sake, don’t break through, or slip in!” he called excitedly, “for if you do, I can’t get you out! I haven’t any rope. I sent it down with Simon.”

But with super-care, and more than necessary coaching from the side-lines, the snowbridge, a rather tricky one, was safely negotiated.

When they reached the tent, the reason for Herron’s lack of delight at his visitor’s arrival was only too obvious. It was, to begin with, one of the smallest of the Expedition tents, and not even a wall-tent, but with the eaves coming directly to the floor. The weight of snow on it had sagged them down so that they practically touched for six or eight inches on each side, restricting the already narrow space. It was barely long enough for the sleeping bag, and wide enough for only a little space between the bag and a long neat row of cans and provisions, with the Primus stove set at the end by the door. This location had been chosen,

## *Episode—Above 20,000 Feet*

---

Herron explained, so that whenever it exploded and flamed up to the roof, you could easily open the tent flaps and put it out in the snow.

It had been a cozy little domestic scene, before the visitor's arrival had interrupted it.

"I had had my supper," said Herron, "and was all completely settled in my sleeping bag for the night—and," he added, "I had to get my boots and coat on again, and get all wet, coming out in the storm for you." Nevertheless, he conformed duly to the regular rites of hospitality on the mountain: helped his visitor unlace his puttees and boots, and gave him some of his own dry socks; took his stiff, snow-encrusted coat, mittens, and other snowy impedimenta away to the ice cave; and heated for him some Ovomaltine, which, with slices of ham and the remains of a Camp Four chappati, provided an ample supper. But it would be idle to pretend that he made his unexpected guest feel entirely welcome.

"Just look how crowded we are!" he exclaimed.

The other, looking around, was compelled to agree. "But it's just for the one night. I'm going back down tomorrow morning."

"You can't. It's too dangerous to cross that bergschrund again without a rope."

So they must accept the discomfort, and settle down with what patience they could command, to wait until the weather was good enough for the rest to come, bringing ropes.

"Anyway, you must be glad of a little company," suggested the visitor.

"Well," said Herron, "I was really very comfortable and happy, lying here alone, thinking, and writing Italian poetry."

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

### v

Next morning they awakened to yellow sunlight on the tent roof, and opening the tiny celluloid window and un-snapping its outside storm curtain, they looked out into a dazzling whiteness and blueness. The snow, rising to the high curling lip of the bergschrund above them, glistened white against a deep turquoise sky, with here and there just a thin silvery veil of cloud over its blueness. Down from the sky were drifting millions of tiny glittering particles of snow, like diamond dust on the blue. The weather was apparently clearing at last. Soon the other men would come up; the forward push could go on again.

Herron had regained all his normal good-humored gayety. "After all," he said, "it really is pleasanter to have company here, even though it does make things a little crowded."

They lay for half the morning, staring at the tent-roof above them, and planning how they would go on next day toward Camp Six, as far as it was safe without a rope, and get the trail broken, so as to speed things up when the others came. Meanwhile, they lazily watched the frost crystals, which had collected an inch thick inside the tent-roof, and were now slowly melting and dripping over everything in the sun's heat.

"Splash! Splash!" the big drops spattered,—over the sleeping bag, over the floor, on the provisions, or sometimes even square into an eye, or an open mouth. It would be time enough to get up and cook breakfast, when the roof, against which one's head and shoulders must brush every time one moved, was at least comparatively dry.

The day passed, more or less cheerily.

Cooking three meals filled much of the time, with a tem-

## *Episode—Above 20,000 Feet*

---

peramental stove that needed continual coaxing and tending, so that just the process of melting snow for water with which to begin the culinary operations was an almost endless matter. Eating was also a very lengthy affair, for neither of the men had brought their forks or spoons, and stews and porridge must be laboriously ladled into the mouth with the slightly hollow tops of the powdered-milk tins. At first this ranked as part of the adventure; but it palled after one trial. For it was a most peculiarly exasperating business. The lumps and liquids dropped and dribbled, over beards, and clothes, and back into the pot—everywhere but into the waiting mouths. Hunger turned to fatigue and nausea, during the long process of a meal.

For the time between, there were exchanges of verses and jokes and limericks, speculations about the arrival of the others next morning, frequent examination of the weather, and long periods of supine dozing. But still the snow did not completely stop.

The next day, there could be no trail-breaking for them, or traveling for the others. The weather was the same thing, and more of it. Still a blue and silver sky, from which came desultory diamond flakes, which somehow piled up amazingly fast outside the tent, in spite of shoveling. Less frequent sunshine now, and all the world, below and around their little private circle of whiteness, shrouded in clouds. Now the tent, almost buried in snow, was getting noticeably danker and damper; the verses and limericks were running out. They composed some themselves, writing them on scraps torn from the Ovomaltine and powdered milk tins, for even the toilet paper, the almost universal writing paper of the Expedition, was too wet to take a pencil mark.

After a long uncertain changeable day, the late afternoon looked again like sure clearing weather. In the excitement

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

of real hope, all the damp, crowded discomfort was completely forgotten. Conversation, which had rather flagged, became lively and animated. There was an exchange of jokes and laughter, and of excited cheerful plans for the morrow. How they would get out all their things and dry them in the sun; for sleeping bag, clothes, and tent floor had been getting wetter and wetter, with each night's frost and morning's drippings. And how they would move the tent, just as soon as they could dig it out, and put it the other side of the ice cave. For Herron had noticed after the last storm that this particular spot was swept by an avalanche. And they looked forward eagerly to the coming of the others and to pushing on again. Sleep was good that night, full of happy anticipations.

Next morning there was not even a glimpse of the sun, and the snow was coming thicker than ever before.

### VI

From then on, things grew more and more strained, the situation more miserable.

No chance of drying anything, ever, apparently. Clothes were clammy, coats used as pillows were soaked, socks were steamed out periodically by body heat in the sleeping bag. An effort was made to mop up the pool of water under the bag, but it was pathetically futile,—it came back in half an hour.

The two ice-axes were rescued from the ice cave, whose entrance had to be dug out frequently as the snow accumulated faster and faster, and were kept within reach. In case another avalanche should come that way, they might be of some use, for propping up the tent and digging it out. And then again, of course they might not. . . . The two took pains

## *Episode—Above 20,000 Feet*

---

not to stiffen, or appear to notice, whenever they heard an avalanche-roar starting in the distance. . . . There began to be definite talk of going down. After all, one seemed to have reached the point where it was a choice of evils.

The next day looked a little better, in the morning, and it was decided to stick it a bit longer. Beside the bergschrund trouble, there was, with the weight of new snow, a chance of avalanches at many places on the way, as well as here, and the danger en route was tremendously increased by the lack of a rope.

Time passed slower and slower. The chief amusement was rising to look out of the window and see the weather prospects.

The two manfully tried to carry on occasional conversations, and managed to become quite excitedly enthusiastic in naming a long list of countries where they especially wanted to travel. They finally decided that they would like to live forever, so as to take in every place in the universe! And they made to each other the obvious comments of the situation, as they listened to the threatening avalanche thunder. How it really would be a pity to die, since life was such a good, rich, delightful thing.—In fact, they said afterward that never had they relished mere existence with quite such a conscious keenness, as up here in their dark little tent among the avalanches.—But if one must die, they agreed, the happiest way, the only desirable way, would be on a mountain—to lie forever lost in a crevasse, or buried by the snows. The usual climbers' platitudes, of course, but both meant them, completely. . . .

Meanwhile, minor discomforts and irritations kept piling up, one by one. There was the dramatic disaster of the bacon. It was due to an effort to give a little variety to the menu—consisting so far only of Ovomaltine, porridge, pea

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

soup with salami, and ham-and-macaroni stew—by frying the fat edge of the ham. It succeeded only in filling the tent with a black pungent smoke, so thick that Herron seemed likely to choke to death coughing; and then a long period of chilly airing out congealed them both to numbness. The stove also grew more than usually temperamental, sometimes flaring up, on the edge of explosion, sometimes refusing to go at all.

After an uncomfortable and interminable day, came an uneasy, restless night, and then another day of storm. The talk of going down became more and more definite. A careful checkover of supplies was made. It was found that there were only five matches left. This provided the excuse for which both had been secretly eager. Anything for a change of scene, whatever the risk.

“Now,” they agreed exultantly, “we’ve really got to go down.”

### VII

In the thickest, coldest storm yet, they started. Each one moved very cautiously and lightly, and held his breath, as he trod along the six or eight feet of the snowbridge. But it did not break. Beyond the bridge, they must kick steps for eight or ten feet up a very steep snow wall, with the ice-axe always firmly implanted to the handle, lest a step break away and they fall back into the bergschrund. The steps, too, stayed firm. And the bit where they must crawl on hands and knees, in the soft new snow, along a shelf under a wall of overhanging ice, was simply amusing. So was the last stretch, when they walked for a few yards on a refreshingly solid knife edge, between two crevasses. So without a rope, the first danger, the great bergschrund, was safely passed.

## *Episode—Above 20,000 Feet*

---

The two looked back, half-triumphant, and half-wistful, from the other side, to the little tent which had sheltered them for so long—it seemed like months. Now it was over, it was an experience rather good fun and interesting to have had, after all. Only a small piece of the back wall of the tent was visible; it was buried in smooth snow to the ridgepole.

“We must take a snapshot of it that way, when we come back,” they decided, “to show, when we tell the story of these days to our friends.” Happily for them, they did not for a moment suspect that neither of them would ever see the tent again.

To go, now, was even harder for Herron than for his companion. He had come, as the first step of the final push; he had stayed, feeling always that he already was one stage on the way to the summit. It was difficult to have to retreat.

They looked again, and turned slowly, and started down.

### VIII

The snow was deep and heavy along the shelf. They forgot the avalanche danger, in the strenuous work of breaking trail. Even though they were moving downhill, they could get on only very slowly. As they went, the storm thickened, and the muffling mist came again, so they did not know their progress.

At last they reached safely the part where one must go along for a distance close under the upper boundary berg-schrund, just before turning sharply down to the plateau. Here the slope was dangerously steep to traverse, and a large crevasse yawned through the mist just below. Herron's friend was leading, about thirty feet ahead. He had stopped to breathe, with feet firmly planted halfway into the knees, and leaning on his ice-axe. Suddenly the wind rose in a vio-

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

lent gust, and began to whirl snow down, from the upper lip of the bergschrund. As it fell upon the slope, it started a little surface avalanche over a large area. Herron was just in safety, but his companion stood quite in the middle of it. He jammed in his ice-axe to the head, and braced himself as solidly as he could. He watched, fascinated, that softly moving snow—pouring as a thin waterfall from along the top of the bergschrund, flowing in a broad shallow stream down the steep slope, and washing by his shins, to slide into the crevasse below. At any moment the waterfall above might increase in volume, the snow stream might become deep enough and strong enough to drag him off his feet, down with it, into the crevasse. Because of having no rope, Herron could do nothing to help. It was probably only a minute or two that he stood, bearing down on the ice-axe head with both hands, looking up, and waiting. But it seemed like hours. Gradually the stream lessened and stopped; and the two went on.

Super-care, kicking steps tranversely down the steep slope, with crevasses at its foot. And super-care crossing the covered part of the main crevasse, where tiny new ones were opening around. This was no place to be, without a rope. But at last they were down, and on the safe gently rolling plateau—just as the mist thickened so that they could hardly see twenty feet around.

It did not thin even for a moment thereafter. They must grope their way like blindfolded men down the slope, guessing only by the lie of the snow, and swinging the track to right or to left in uncertain curves, as first one direction and then another seemed more likely to be correct. The wind was rising, the snow beat cold against their faces as they stumbled on. Herron's foot froze, and they stopped and rubbed it vigorously with snow for a long time. As

*Episode—Above 20,000 Feet*

---

they went farther and farther, they began to wonder whether in the storm they had missed the camp entirely. At last, in a quite unexpected direction, the tents appeared. They had taken six hours for the down trip, which usually required only one to two.

It was an experience of the complete luxury of civilization, to shout for Ramana as they arrived hungry, and soon to be relating their adventures, while they sat in a dry tent, and consumed real food, cooked by a real cook, and eaten with real forks and spoons—not milk tin tops.

---

## *Chapter XVIII*

### UNDER THE RIDGE

#### I

#### *The Ridge of the Madmen \**

O N the eternal snowfields,  
Far, far down  
Under the white ridge  
Hung in the sky  
For sixty days now  
Day after day  
We have been camping:  
Toward that white ridge,  
Toward that white ridge,  
Day after day  
Pulls our desire:  
And time after time  
Some new hindrance  
Holds us imprisoned  
Barred from our desire,  
Staying still in camp.

Toward that white ridge  
Hung in the sky  
I would like to start today,  
Without a rope,

\* Literally translated from the Italian. See Appendix E, page 322.

## *Under the Ridge*

---

Without a companion,  
Without a hindrance,  
Foot-free, light-hearted,  
With eyes looking upward,  
To climb, to climb,  
Without ever stopping,  
Alone, and exulting,  
Up to the high edge  
Of the ridge and the sky.  
And not to stop there, even,  
But step by step  
From that highest foothold  
To keep on climbing,  
Until I climb above  
The height of the Mountain.  
Until I have below me  
All of the mountains  
Of all of the earth.  
Until I am able  
To bend down my head  
And to the plains  
Of all of the world,  
Silent, unhearing,  
From that height immobile,  
To say serenely,  
“I have arrived. . . .”

But there is the ridge  
And here are we.  
White and unchanging  
It looks down in pity  
Or perhaps with laughter  
At our human madness.

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

But we are off tomorrow....  
And we will come back then,  
With the ridge as trophy,  
Or even the mountain?  
God himself does not know,  
Only He knows  
That we are madmen  
And that we deserve  
To stay crushed by the ice  
And lost forever  
On the side of the mountain.

There under the ridge  
That waits, unmoved and laughing.

*R. H., August, 1932.*

### II

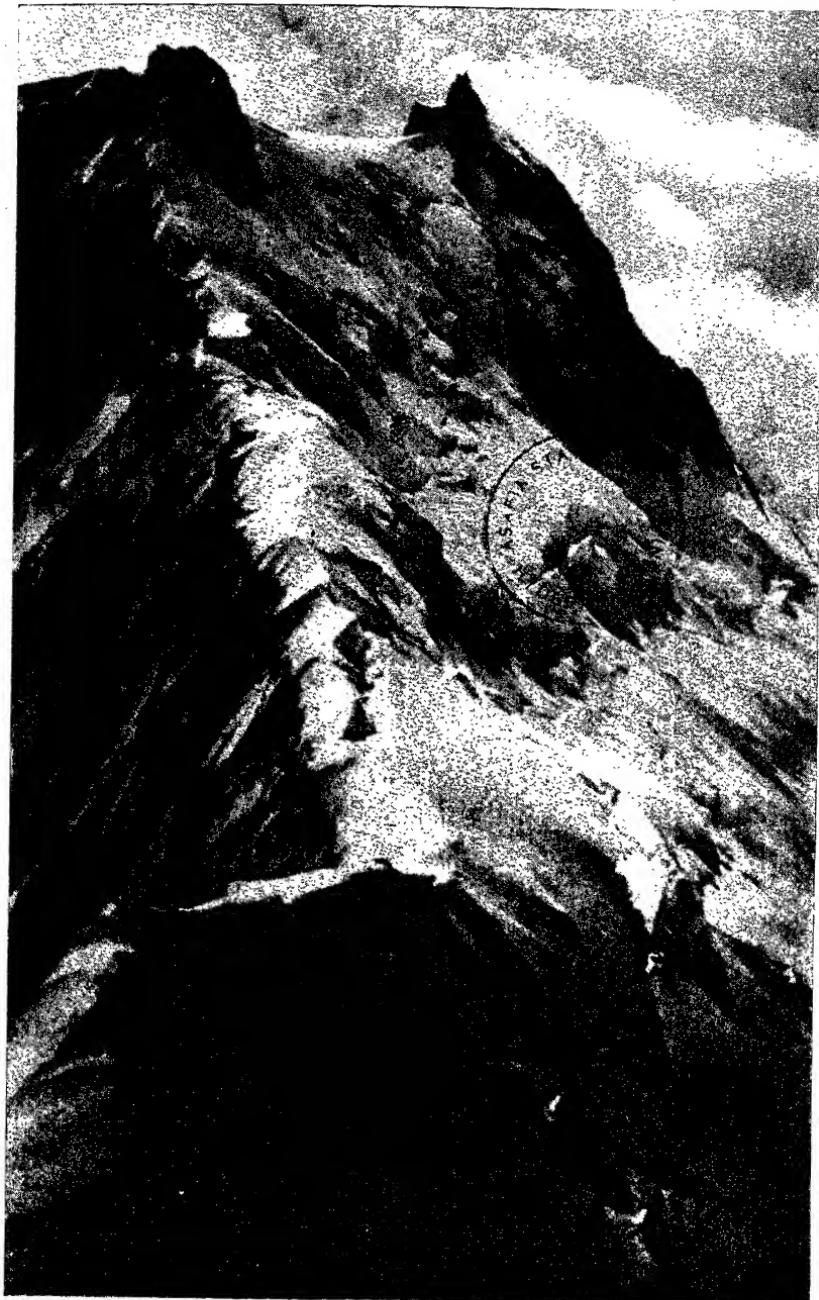
With the return from the establishment of Camp Seven, a long period of delay at Camp Four had begun for the Expedition.

Not that it was planned to be long. "It was," wrote Herron,\* "a time of waiting and expectancy, of a chained imprisoned impetus to move and go up." Every day, of all that time, the men were hoping to start toward the Ridge and the summit *tomorrow or day after tomorrow, when the weather cleared or when the coolies came.*

"And I must say," Herron continued, "I was never in my life so spiritually stretched upon one single point. That is, that damnable place up there,—so near, to be seen nearly every day, only a few miles away... and yet so far,—in fact never to be reached at all this year..."

Thus endless days went dragging by, until they finally

\* From a letter of R. H.



### THE RIDGE

Looking toward the Northeast Peaks from Rakiot Peak



## *Under the Ridge*

---

stretched into weeks—endless days and weeks of a deadly succession of difficulties, as one thing after another kept happening, to hold the climbers back.

### III

The troubles were of various sorts.

More and more, different men began to suffer from physical ailments.

More and more, the weather took a really serious hand in the game. From the middle of July on, it had grown daily grimmer and more threatening. The bright cloudless perfection was ended. Most of the days now were a matter of dark clouds rolling in from over the saddle to the south, of very occasional sun, frequent, though never severe, wind, and once or twice a day light scuds of snow. Now, too, the air was becoming perceptibly colder, reminding us that in these altitudes, the threat of winter, and of the powder snow of winter, was drawing near.

Also, as time went on, there was more and more difficulty in getting any coolies above Camp Four. On the push to the Ridge, five had been brought as far as Camp Five, and two to Camp Six. Of the next lot of arrivals at Camp Four, only one out of five could or would move the next day without groaning.

“*Bima! Bima! (Sick! Sick!)*” day after day we would hear them wail.

Thus things grew progressively worse.

### IV

At first, the climbers on their return from Camp Seven on the Ridge, on August 2nd, had thought to go up again

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

after three or four days' rest, synchronizing their start with the coming of the next lot of coolies.

On August 5th, Herron and Simon actually did get off, traveling alone, after a discouraging scene—Lieutenant Frier trying in vain to persuade "sick" coolies to accompany them. Merkl and Bechtold were to follow in support next day, and Wiessner with other coolies the day after. But on the morning of the 6th, Simon appeared in Camp Four with a toothache and a bad throat, leaving Herron waiting alone at Camp Five. Merkl and Bechtold were now unwilling to go on, since they felt three would be a more unwieldy number to use above Camp Five than four, as the extra weight of the whole second sleeping bag, as well as the additional provision, must be borne by one man, instead of divided between two. They tried to persuade Wiessner to join them and make up a fourth. But as he had planned to bring the next string of coolies, he convinced them that it would be a better plan for them all to wait. Next day the coolies arrived.

Next day, also, a light snow began to fall. This was the beginning of the long storm.

### v

For those who stayed in Camp Four, the storm was a trying period of waiting. The excursion of Herron's friend to Camp Five caused a little interest. When he did not return by late afternoon of the day he left, another climber followed his track up the plateau, until he heard far off through the mists the exchange of shouts, on his safe arrival at Camp Five. Then he came back to Four. The storm went on.

Softly, gently, day after day, the warm snow fell. Merci-

## *Under the Ridge*

---

lessly, it piled up—two or three feet on the level, much more on the slopes. Herron and his friend struggled down through it to Camp Four. Some of the men, feeling restless, started up to Camp Five, taking a tent and loads, to have them there ready for the advance, when the storm should end. They found the going so difficult now that they parked the loads beside a crevasse part way up, and came back, to wait for good weather.

This excursion, however, succeeded in proving conclusively to Aschenbrenner that his frozen feet was no better. He had hoped, persistently, day after day; and had pinned his faith on the effect of very large boots, with more socks inside. Kunigk was to send back his, as soon as he could get others, on the road to Gilgit. Every group of coolies arriving at Camp Four had been eagerly questioned by Aschenbrenner, "Sahib boot?" At last the boots had come; and he tried them out on this trip. It was no use. In spite of extra socks, the toes stiffened again immediately, and grew completely numb.

Simon's throat, also, was getting much worse, from the strain of the altitude, for he was proving too old for his body to adapt itself easily. Bechtold was due back at his work in Germany.

Now through the storm these three started down, toward the base camp and the outside world. At Camp Four there stayed only the bitter-enders—Merkl, Herron, and Wiessner, with Lieutenant Frier, while I remained to report proceedings.

There were also eight coolies in camp, ready for the final push to the summit, which was to take place as soon as the storm ended. For it had now been definitely decided that it was too late in the season for any further elaborate preparations, any more going back and forth between the higher

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

camps, carrying up stores. The next assault would be the last one, and the aim of it would be to travel straight through to the top. A specially picked group of porters had therefore been chosen, those who had during the summer proved themselves hardest and best. Wiessner and Lieutenant Frier had settled on the coolies, and had sent their names down to the Jemadar. These men had come, and were now waiting in their tents.

In the midst of the storm, soon after the departure of the three climbers, a rope of coolies appeared, sent from the base camp by Bechtold, with fresh meat and messages. Next day they turned to go down again. The chosen eight started to go with them!

A time of tense drama. Lieutenant Frier stepped forward to argue and expostulate; the eight figures stood tall and dark and unresponsive, looming up against the wide empty background of snow and gray sky. At their feet lay the heaps of their blankets, tied into loads, ready at any moment to be picked up, as they should start down,—and leave us. Frier talked on and on. The rest of us sank down on to the new snow that covered the frozen mounds among the tents, and sat gloomily watchful. Again, the success of the Expedition seemed to hang by a thread, on the whim of the coolies.

Frier finally persuaded them to stay.

### VI

It seemed as though the storm would never end. Every day of waiting and suspense counted double.

In this time, we were losing more and more our past vision of our purpose. Here at Camp Four, our mental position was as much changed as was our physical, when we

## *Under the Ridge*

---

had stopped looking at the mountain, rising beautiful in the distance, and had begun living on its side. Our desire for the summit was no longer mentally visible to us, a thing that we could consider and understand, seeing clearly its total splendor. We were conscious of it only as a wearing annoyance and an irritating drive:—we could not externalize it now, so completely had it become absorbed in ourselves, a part of every moment of our living.

### VII

On August 14th, the weather cleared. The men prepared to start, at last, for the push to the summit. The coolies were notified to be ready to go with them, next day. Then came the discovery that they had no more rations.

Possibly they had not brought from the base camp the amount ordered, more probably in those long stormy days they had passed the time by eating more than the allotted quantity. In any case, the push was stopped. It seemed that the climbers must wait five more days, till the coolies could get chappatis from the base camp, and return.

But the pendulum was swinging fast, now, back and forth, between discouragement and hope. One of the favorite diversions of almost every clear day had been to stroll with glasses over to the place on the edge of the plateau from which one could see the route up, and to watch for coolies on the way, or at the camps. Scarcely had we realized the failure of these coolies, when hope appeared again. Some one returned, in excitement, to report another rope coming, this side of Camp Three. Perhaps they were bringing more rations.

There was about an hour to wait. They arrived. Bechtold had sent up only the mail!—

It would have been possible now to collect enough rations for two porters, to go on a day or so with the men. Herron suggested this, and Lieutenant Frier seconded the suggestion. But there was not a great deal of discussion. The pros and cons were briefly gone over.

Herron pointed out that it looked more and more as if we would never be able to get a greater number in condition at one time, anyway. But Merkl and Wiessner said promptly that two could not carry much more than their own blankets and rations, that it was necessary to have at least three, to get any real benefit from portage. The plans were well organized for an attack on the basis of three or more porters, and they felt that strength should not be wasted by the climbers in an attempt that under such unfavorable conditions seemed to them almost sure to prove abortive.

Herron's feeling was in favor of pushing on, even under these unfavorable circumstances, in order to take advantage of every day of good weather. He also considered that as the season was getting later, snow conditions would probably become progressively more difficult for high climbing, while there seemed no real reason to hope that the coolie situation would improve. But the others reminded him that Schneider on Peak Kaufmann much farther north in the Pamirs, had actually climbed at the end of September, finding then most settled weather and very good snow, after the August storms.

Against the attempt there was also the difficulty of the Mulde. There, it seemed to Merkl and Wiessner obligatory to have coolies with the sahibs. Especially after any period of storm and new snow, trail-breaking was so exhausting

## *Under the Ridge*

---

that they felt it would not be humanly possible, unless the climbers could come to it without loads. And it appeared from conditions that they had seen previously in the Mulde, and elsewhere on the route, that at least for several days after a fall, the loose snow would slide and drift, so that any track trodden out would fill in again, and they could not make a path unloaded one day, and use it loaded the next. After new snow there would be also a chance of small avalanches in the Mulde. In the face of this likelihood of wasted effort and possibility of danger, Merkl and Wiessner felt it better to husband their strength for a more hopeful situation.

Those who spoke for pushing on represented the less experienced element. Lieutenant Frier was new to mountains, and even Herron had had only seven years of climbing, as against Merkl's and Wiessner's fifteen to twenty. So Lieutenant Frier said hardly a sentence, Herron not very much more. The argument never became warm. It seemed, even to those two, only too probable that the advocates of delay might be right. Their weighty councils of prudence quickly prevailed against Herron's burning eagerness to push on, to try what might indeed prove impractical or even impossible, but at least to be making an attempt.

It was decided to wait for the next lot of coolies.

## IX

The days went by. Again we waited, and hoped. It was growing more and more wearing, this beating rhythm of tense strain, then long monotony—strain, then monotony. Until the final push could get started, there was nothing else for us that was real. All the usual colors were wiped out of the world; the ordinary interests of living were

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

suspended; we were down to the bare bones of the situation.

This unnatural simplification was affecting people more and more. The psychological atmosphere in Camp Four was tightening.

I was forced, however, to realize that things did not go by any fixed rules. It proved impossible to generalize, "Men living under severe nervous tension at high altitudes, react thus and so." I had heard a great deal about the bad temper engendered by such conditions, and I was prepared for all sorts of fireworks in the way of irritable outbursts. These almost never took place. About the only generalization it would be safe to make was the natural and very obvious one—that high altitude, plus nerve strain, made important troubles seem more important and troubling, and minor irritating traits more irritating. But hardly, even then, to a pathological degree.

Beyond that, it appeared to be a matter of individual temperament. The strain was visible, of course, in all, very occasionally bringing out each one's less lovable and attractive characteristics; but there was no universality of mood or of symptoms. One man might show sometimes perhaps an irrational obstinacy; another a tense impatience, or a little flare of childish annoyance ending in a smile; another, a careful frigid politeness. And even these were only scattered manifestations.

Most of the time, from the beginning to the end of our stay at Camp Four, life went on with superficial normality. Hours of games, and pleasant lazy talk, or singing, or lazy silences. Herron's eager arguments, and serene savoring of minor enjoyments; Wiessner's bluff good humor and optimism; Lieutenant Frier's consistent casual cheerfulness and easy jokes; Aschenbrenner's gay little Tirolean folk songs; Merkl's and Bechtold's cheery early-morning chant, "*Ein*

## *Under the Ridge*

---

*und zwanzig, zwei und zwanzig . . .*": everyone contributed something to group pleasantness.

And everyone kept his individuality sharp and distinct, whether in good mood or in bad. There was no sign, such as I had from my reading frankly expected, of a merging of personalities into common group irritability, or group lassitude.

### x

Yet it was becoming a strange time, a time of moods, when ordinary things took on an extraordinary complexion. There was, for instance, the Chongra Peak trip, which for a period so uncomfortably occupied our lives.

Probably the suggestion sprang, originally, from a subconscious desire for action, as a relief from the strain. Somewhere in the group the idea appeared, that to keep in training while waiting for the coolies, the three climbers, Merkl, Herron and Wiessner, should make a two or three days' journey, for a first ascent of the largest Chongra Peak. From the saddle just above Camp Four it is the third summit to the left, or north.

At once I felt secretly uneasy about this excursion. It was bound to be long and arduous, and it seemed too bad to risk over-fatigue, for something without bearing on the main attack. During the summer there had grown in me the feeling that as long as we focussed on the mountain, all would go well and safely with us, but if during this Expedition dedicated to Nanga Parbat, we deviated from our main aim toward any lesser goal, it might jealously exact a terrible penalty. In the long days of waiting at Camp Four, my mild superstition had become a dominant belief. Now this proposed trip seemed like an unnecessary tempting of fate.

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

It may be that the others subconsciously shared this feeling. There was really, from the moment that the thing was suggested, a very strained atmosphere about it. The following account is just as I wrote it, sitting in my tent at Camp Four, and waiting for the men to return:

### xi

—It was uncanny, the silence of the camp that morning. A bright, clear day, around seven o'clock, shining blue and white outside. But gradually a small cloud drifted across the face of the sun, so that our plateau lay in luminous shadow, though all Chilas and Karakorum below us were blazing in sunlight. The cloud grew thicker, the shadow around us darker.

Perhaps that had something to do with the ominous silence. It was so very still. Always, as people woke in the tents, a pleasant low hum of talk would come from them, jovial shouts for Ramana and breakfast, remarks back and forth. This morning, not a sound. Somehow breakfasts were brought and eaten, with the minimum of words. One by one the men emerged from their tents. Though the cloud in the south was dropping lower, with occasional spits of snow, it seemed to be silently taken for granted that they were going to Chongra Peak. There was no exchange of opinion, or discussion. The uncanny silence continued. Without a word, the three men got out rucksacks and put in sleeping bags, and two of them set to work to take down their tent to carry. The pegs were frozen in. They hacked and pounded at them, but did not even swear. Ramana joined to help. They hardly seemed to notice him.

There was something to me almost terrible in the purposeful quiet of these preparations. I had had a fear of the

## *Under the Ridge*

---

Chongra Peak venture, both rational and superstitious, from the first. Now, as the men moved silently about, in the gray light and occasional scudding snow, it was as if they were carrying out some dreadful doom, which they could not escape, even though it was against their own desire and volition. In silence they tied rucksacks, and wrapped up the tent; and the snow came thicker and thicker.

Then, all of a sudden, to my intense relief, they abandoned the attempt. They let rucksacks and tent lie in the middle of the path, just as they were, dropped a remark about waiting till it cleared, and with one accord gathered in the other tent. Almost as if they felt a relief of escape from the doom, they spent the rest of that day hilariously, in silly amusing games.

The next day dawned with perfect weather, but the long Chongra Peak trip seemed by common consent to have been abandoned. Lazy and pleasant nine o'clock breakfasts were indulged in. Then gradually the occupants of the tents began to come out into the sunlight.

“What are you doing today?” I asked the first one.

“Haven’t decided yet.”

A second figure appeared, and addressed the first. “How about a little walk up the plateau to the saddle, for exercise?”

“With or without rope?”

“With, of course.”

Again, there was none of the usual discussion. It was not ten minutes from that time before they were off. Rope tied around the waist, ice-axe pulled out of the snow—no more preparation than that.

“We’ll be back in an hour or two,” they said. And the three figures, dark against the sun, plodded slowly through the heavy snow up the plateau.

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

They made for a moment a picturesque row, on the top rim of its white curve, small and black against a great white cloud billowing up into the sky. Then they vanished over the rim. Later we could see them, little dark shapes, winding out their long dark trail behind them, traversing toward the lowest point of the saddle.

Now clouds and mists were beginning to close down on Chongra Peak. It was after noon, and they had said they would be gone two hours. But they were not turning back. Lieutenant Frier and I did not wait lunch for them.

After lunch the clouds grew thicker, and a light snow began. We saw them once or twice, as the clouds drifted, but they were not turning back. They were climbing up the first of the Chongra Peaks. Ramana and I planned a fine dinner for them. The snow became thick and heavy. Our last glimpse was about three o'clock. They were still going up.—

So much I wrote at Camp Four, . . . and so much for the reality of presentiment. As a matter of fact, the men returned safe and sound. An hour or so before dark, they plodded wearily into camp. They had been drawn on, almost against their own wish, by the climber's urge to reach a summit. So they had made a second ascent of the snow dome of the lowest and nearest of the three Chongra Peaks, (21,013 feet).

I admit I was really relieved to see them back. And they seemed relieved, themselves. . . .

Early in July, Aschenbrenner and the doctor had walked up this particular peak easily from Camp Four in three hours. These three strong climbers, now well acclimated, had required over six hours for the ascent. It gave an ominous measure of the difference between climbing on the hard snow of July and in this soft new powder.

### XII

Referring to my diary, I find that things began to happen again the next day, and that our ups and downs of suspense, and disappointment, suspense, and disappointment, were to continue actually only two days more. Just from memory, I should have said they went on for another week, at least, with a monotonous iteration of repetition. The same thing, again and again. These constant shifts, losing none of their bitter intensity for us, were becoming unspeakably wearing. They felt rather like those false starts and backings with which a train sometimes tortures one, while one sits desperately waiting for it to move on toward a desired goal.

### XIII

We had now two coolies in camp. We kept our regular look-out for coolies. As we saw a rope at last approaching, we hoped that this time they might prove to be the ones for whom Merkl had sent down a note two or three days before, and for whom we had been waiting. They should be coming, prepared with rations, for the final push.

They filed into camp, looking very neat and proud in new gray cloth outfits, which had just arrived from Srinagar. But Bechtold had not received the note yet. They brought no extra rations.

We began hoping again, for the next day. . . .

These rationless coolies went down next morning. But we saw another lot arriving at Camp Three. At last!

We could not wait until these should come farther. We sent Shukar-Ali the Astori to the edge of the plateau, to call down to them, and make sure that all was well. They shouted back and forth. He reported.

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

There was no more atta left in the base camp! The coolies expected the sahibs to come down, and abandon Nanga Parbat.

Now we seemed faced with final disaster.

### xiv

In this situation, Merkl and Wiessner thought that the only move was for everyone to go at once to the base camp and send the coolies post-haste down the valley for more atta.

Again, and more positively than before, Herron felt that because of the lateness of the season, the additional delay of five or six days involved in waiting for coolie rations, and the present fine weather, it might be better to try to go on, even though without coolies.

It would, of course, mean staking everything on one desperate throw, making a fight against great odds, very likely overwhelming odds. Such a distance, at such high altitudes, had never then been attempted without coolies.

But there was always the long chance to finding in the Mulde better snow conditions than one had any reason to expect. There was the long chance that physical strength greater than would seem possible might come to meet the desperate need, that sheer will and desire might drive the reluctant body to carry incredible loads, and bring it through to the summit. Herron would have liked to take that chance, to make that attempt.

That it was a long chance, no one was readier to admit than he. It involved not only possibilities of exhaustion, which would prevent a perhaps more favorably conditioned attempt a week or two later, but also possibilities of real disaster, if the men should be caught without sufficient

## *Under the Ridge*

---

food or fuel, in a many days' storm, above that dangerous passage between Camps Five and Six. Only the lateness of the season, the uncertainties of the weather, and the unreliability of the coolies, could justify it.

The other two seemed to feel less the pressure of time, and to have more faith in the future of weather and coolies. Herron's suggestion was not even discussed. The arguments against it were only too obvious. It would have needed the gambler's spirit, to kindle responsively to such a spark.

Perhaps this conservatism saved all the climbers' lives.—Perhaps it lost them the mountain.—Perhaps it did not materially affect the final issue.—Who knows? . . .

### xv

Another bright day dawned, sunshine on the whiteness of Nanga Parbat. The snow was frozen hard. The men stuffed sleeping bags into rucksacks and were off. They rushed at top speed down the mountain. Now a decision for action was made, they could not go fast enough. After all, it would not be so bad to get back again to the base camp. They raced and slid, taking long glissades down the steep slopes, making the whole thing almost on the run.

Except when they stopped to have a try at another rescue of a load. Only nine days before, a frightened porter behind Simon, breaking through a snowbridge, had dropped his load, the summer's second mishap of this sort. The crevasse, then narrow and covered, now gaped some forty feet wide, the footprints of the old path leading up to the perpendicular edge of the gulf. Using Herron's body for a belay to tie a rope round, Wiessner slid a hundred feet down into it on the rope. But the bottom of the crevasse was buried in huge ice blocks, that had fallen as it broke open. Wiessner was

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

hauled out again by interested and excited coolies, and this attempt at a rescue ended as futilely as the July one.

Just below Camp Two, the men slowed up once more, and went cautiously, clinging with their hands, down the steps cut in a twelve-foot sheer ice wall, that formed the upper side of a deep crevasse. It was the one point on the route, this side of Camp Five, that offered any real technical difficulty.

Fast again, on the steep, softening, lower slopes, sliding and running and leaping down, like boys turned loose from school. It was good to be alive. It was good to be moving at last. After the long check, now things were going to start.



“ . . . THE WEATHER HAD GROWN DAILY GRIMMER AND MORE THREATENING . . . ”





## *Chapter XIX*

### BASE CAMP IDYLL

#### I

I HAVE known body's hunger,  
Hunger for food, any food, the plain food of ordinary  
living.

And it was a fiercer thing than ever I had dreamed,  
A thing that raged and devoured, and day and night it  
would not sleep.

I have known spirit's hunger,  
Hunger for the gentleness, the gracious kindness of ordi-  
nary living,

And it was a harsher, bitterer hunger than ever I had  
dreamed,

A destitution and a longing beyond my imagining.

I have been outside.

I have seen our safe comfortable friendly life from outside.

I have known what the starving man knows.

I have known what the pioneer and the explorer know,  
And all those beyond the edges of the civilized world.

I have seen what most men all their lives never see—  
The unspeakable beauty of ordinary living. . . .

*August, 1932.*

#### II

Back to the base camp. Back from the snow world, to the  
world of color, of life, of detail.

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

"I had forgotten," said one of the climbers, "that there were so many things in the world."

As I came off the glacier onto the moraine, I saw a spider run across a rock. That little live thing. It was wildly exciting. And the multitudinous things there were to look at. The first clump of grass and plants among the rocks—how marvelous it was, all the tiny exquisite details of it. The infinite variety and multiplicity of life. In that stark though beautiful simplicity of the barren snows, one had forgotten that the rest of the earth was like this.

And the colors, the sharp brilliance of them. While we were at Camp Four, autumn had come below. The grass was a rich russet brown, with plants dull red to burning orange, and bushes still vivid green, gray rocks, and, for background, deep blue sky and snow mountains.

For a long time we all went round in a sort of ecstatic daze. Form, color, life, movement,—it was such a multifarious and thrilling world. . . .

How we reveled in the renewal of that intimacy with the earth, that had formerly been so taken for granted. Herron named a few of its aspects. "To lie on the green grass, among the flowers and the bushes, to walk, barefoot, on the earth, among the green,—however undignified it might seem for a 'sahib' to the barefooted coolies!—to drink out of the little brook running through the pasture, . . .—this was an intense physical and esthetic pleasure . . ." \*

The quintessence of it all seemed to come at mealtimes. To sit in the sunshine, on the familiar zwieback tins, with warm dry turf under our feet, in the midst of all these newly realized wonders, and to satisfy our ravenous gnawing hunger with real food,—not things out of cans, old and stale and tasting of their tinny home, but fresh food—

\* From a letter of R. H.

## *Base Camp Idyll*

---

potatoes and meat, juicy mutton with sweet succulent fat—and plenty of everything, two senses delighted at once, eye and taste—it was wonderful! And at night there came the joy of the bonfire, that shone glowing and warm. Just living in such a world was very good.

### III

The procession of the seasons had marched by, since first we had come to the edge of the snow world. In the meadows around the base camp, the grass and plants had grown up green, from the scrubby brown of winter; strange flowers had blossomed and died, exotic blue and purple in the summer greenness; and now we were in autumn. Brown grass again, scattered with scarlet and crimson. In clear bright light, we watched for hours the orange butterflies fluttering over our red and tawny meadows.

### IV

The life was so gentle and happy that every one reacted to it. The kindly earth to live and sleep on, instead of the liquid cold of the snow; good food, heavenly food; and a friendly temperature, instead of everything freezing solid in one's tent. One had not realized how tiring it had become to have everything always freezing. And the world of color to look at. How could the climbers help enjoying it! It was a sort of lotus land between their weary voyagings. Even if they did not wish to waste the time, if they longed to be at the mountain again, still they did not chafe here; they waited, peaceful and content.

A harmony greater than any before grew among the men. There were continual jokes and laughter. Snatches of sing-

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

ing came from the tents every morning. In the afternoon, while Merkl worked at his writing and account-keeping, and the typewriter banged in the white tent, Herron and Wiessner strolled together over the hills. They stopped always on the way, to play a bit on the boulders of the nearest hillside. That is the climber's favorite pastime for rest days, trying to work himself up a crack or the almost perpendicular face of an obstinate boulder.

There were special diversions, too. Nature study was one. A herd of the deer-like oorial, perhaps thirty or forty of them, had taken to grazing in the early morning on the moraine near the camp. We got up in the cool freshness, to look at them through the glasses; and one morning the three climbers went out with Lieutenant Frier and saw him stalk and shoot one. Then there was a great bird, a lammergeier, that came almost every day and circled round just above the camp, close over our heads. We watched and watched him, fascinated—the square airplane shape of his wings, the sweep and soar of his circling, or, as he came very near, the cruel curve of his beak, and the ruff of feathers at his throat. He always stopped all occupation, when he appeared.

A pleasant amusement in bad weather was pasting rupees. We had in camp two canvas money bags full, three or four thousand rupees altogether, or about a thousand dollars. They had been sent in the form of half notes for safety, from the Bank in Srinagar, to pay our coolies, and for other expenses on the way out. They were new five and ten rupee notes, bound together in bundles, then cut in two through the middle. The dak runner brought in one bag of valueless half notes one week, the other bag the next. Now with scissors, paste and strips of thin paper, we must join the notes of the same number, and restore them to their value.

## *Base Camp Idyll*

---

Piles and piles of them we worked on, in the white tent, in the rain—or sometimes in the sun. But not out of doors, even on the clearest days. A gust of wind could too easily scatter a small fortune.

### v

With cheerful gayety the good days drifted by.

Even the coolies felt the benignant influence of the place. Their voices were not raised in loud quarrelsome tones quite so often as usual. And once I saw them enjoying an impromptu war dance. A Hunza, full of surplus energy, began to execute swordlike flourishes with his ice-axe. Another seized one of the round iron plates on which they bake chappatis, and used it as a shield, and together they pranced back and forth, attacking and defending in decorative style, while the rest looked on and laughed.

Seldom however, even in these halcyon days, did surplus energy in coolies take such attractive forms. It was much more likely to burst out in free-for-all fist fights.

### VI

In the evening, after the long pleasant daylight hours, the men would sit luxuriously late, sometimes even until ten o'clock, around the bonfire. After the cold tents of Camp Four, they reveled in the marvel of fire in the cool night, the warmth and the brightness of it. As it slowly died, they watched the streaked flanks of mountains, like great animals, dimly black-and-white through the dark, and, above, the falling stars. They spoke of how good it would be to get home, of all the little charms of home. . . . There was a pause.

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

“But,” said the soft voice of one, “we shall be homesick for all this—some day.” . . .

### VII

The days went on, in the beautiful world of color. Bright blue skies, tawny autumn on the flanks of the lower hills, and winter on the snowpeaks around.

By night of the fourth day, the Hunzas were due with atta. Then the next day they should cook it, and the morning after that, start for the final push.

It was originally planned that Lieutenant Frier should not leave until after they came, so that he might give them their final directions. But they had not returned from Tatto when the date arrived on which he must go, called back by his military duties. Regretfully we said good-by, with all the most cordial of last messages, and watched him off, under a gray sky which began to pour down rain.

He had worked so hard for the Expedition all summer, had so completely sacrificed his own comfort and interests for it; had sent his personal servant away with Kunigk, given up any attempt at shooting, and made three trips up and down the mountain, coming up the third time when he was not in the best physical condition. It seemed a great pity that he would not now be able to share in the excitement and glory of the last push.

### VIII

That afternoon, we hailed the arrival of the coolies. But already the bad weather had settled in, with low-hanging clouds that had been dropping rain all day. Still it might possibly clear before morning. Dinner that night was a ten-

## Base Camp Idyll

---

tative last meal, with a feeling of the final crisis drawing very near.

There was no sort of "just before the battle" talk, however. The men sat in the white tent around the candle, a bright spot in the darkness, and chatted as usual. Reminiscences of former climbs, that stock subject of conversation, some discussion of snow conditions found on the mountain earlier in the summer—the usual sort of after-dinner exchange.—That was all.

Next day we waked to hopelessness, a thick autumn mist hiding everything more than thirty feet away, and jeweling to brightness the nearest meadow growths. Through it came in their dun clothing a group of Hunzas led by the Jemadar, to consult the *Burra Sahib* in his white tent.

"What were plans?" They stood respectfully grouped, tall in the gray mist, with the Jemadar in front to talk, while the *Burra Sahib* answered, sitting inside the tent.

"*Kal* (tomorrow)," was the answer. Or perhaps "*Kal Kal*." Not today.

But no discouragement showed among the three climbers. There was still the wonder of a very specially good dinner—roast oorial, and potato salad with onions, soup, and chocolate pudding, (made with cocoa and zwieback). Such a banquet inevitably cheers. And there was so much united good feeling—joking and horseplay. Merkl insisted that Herron should try a slice of raw onion in his tea.

"But really it would be very good. Really! Really!" And the ensuing struggle in such close quarters almost knocked the tent down. They capped one another with humorous poems. No discouragement here.

Nor even when the storm went on another day. Soon the weather must clear, and the final attack could start. Meanwhile, this was a good place to be.

---

## Chapter XX

### THE FINAL ATTACK

*“Let him who seeks the monarchs of our quest  
Challenge their wakened might,  
...summits crowned with summer light.  
Not his to tempt their rest  
When winter rigours and cold snows encumber:—  
The sleeping ones have but to stir in slumber,  
And he shall sleep with them.”*

—GEOFFREY WINTHROP YOUNG.

#### I

ON the morning of August 28th, the climbers set out for the final attack on the mountain.

“A fine day!” Merkl had shouted, and had awakened the camp to preparation soon after dawn. It was glorious autumn weather again—cool and crystal clear. The sky was without clouds. The porters’ rations of chappatis were cooked—enough for ten days. The loads were ready. Things seemed auspicious at last.

At about half past eight, they left—Merkl, Herron, Wiessner, and twelve porters. It had taken a long time to give final directions and get started. At the very end, there was a lineup for a snapshot. The twelve porters stood in an impressive row in the rear, with Merkl, Herron and Wiessner kneeling in front. Sahibs and coolies, they all smiled cheerily into the camera. But I do not believe I was the only one to whom the thought came that for some of those smiling men this might prove to be their last pic-

## *The Final Attack*

---

ture. I brushed the thought aside, like a troublesome fly. Our brief farewell words were only of good luck, with strong hopes of victory. The climbers shook hands with me. They bent to the ascent, and started up the steepness of the Moraine Hill.

It made a fine-looking procession, crawling up the autumn-brown slopes, the largest, the fittest, the most completely equipped caravan that had ever left the base camp. The Jemadar and the rest of the coolies stood about, watching with interest. Suddenly a call came down: the porters had forgotten some essential. The base camp coolies ran over to their encampment, retrieved it, and hurried on, to hand it to one who was lagging part way down the hillside. Now they were really off. . . .

Slowly the procession mounted, scattering a little as it bent to the steep slopes. The dun figures grew smaller and higher, hardly visible on the brown autumn grass or the gray summit rocks, only occasionally silhouetted as moving dots against the skyline. Then they vanished.

### II

I had decided to follow, the hour or two's climb to the top of the Moraine Hill, and watch them start up the glacier. From its summit, I could see that there was a great delay about getting on to the ice from the final rocks. Where our earlier path had gone, was now a complete network of vicious crevasses. As these had been opening, more and more of them, wider and wider, during the summer, slowly the route had been pushed farther and farther to the right, beneath the threatening, avalanching north face. Now it was proving necessary for the men to work their way to the very end of the moraine rocks, at the extreme right. I

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

— saw a long line at last emerge on to the glacier, already far behind the normal time schedule, directly under that terrible fourteen thousand feet of precipices.

They moved along the snow very slowly, fifteen black dots, in four groups—three, three, five and four. Herron and Wiessner, with a coolie between them, were the three black dots of the first rope. They were taking turns in going first, for the difficult work of breaking trail. Merkl led the second rope. The others were made up entirely of coolies. The long line gradually moved on, leaving a little dark thread of footprints behind. Even so early in the morning, they were finding the snow soft and tiring, for after the last storm it had not melted and frozen solid in customary summer style. It was winter snow conditions that they were meeting now. Already, on the comparative level of the beginning of the glacial basin, the coolies were going badly, and resting often and long. It seemed to me, watching, that they were taking an interminable time to get on. The string of dots crawled, and halted, and crawled again, close under Nanga Parbat's great north face. Surely never had they progressed so slowly before.

Finally, they began to mount the steep rise. Now, they were beyond the special avalanche danger: I could breathe easily, at last. They stopped, as they so frequently did, to rest. Fifteen little dots sitting along the white slopes, they looked for all the world like a row of black crows, perched there.

Suddenly above me on the right I heard a roar, the familiar roar of an avalanche. It was such a big one that I quickly located its giant waterfall of powder snow, starting down from almost the very top of the wall. Remorselessly it poured down, falling over precipices with snow dust rising like spray, tumbling in cataracts from cliff to cliff,

## *The Final Attack*

---

gathering volume on intervening snow slopes, roaring louder and louder. It was a perceptible moment from the time it started, before it finally spread its weight of snow over the glacial basin. The cloud of snow dust around it hid the men from my sight; it billowed higher and higher; it filled the whole basin with a solid whiteness; it rolled out, and piled itself up and up, until it concealed even the site of Camp Two, on the skyline three or four thousand feet above the basin. In all that summer of avalanches, this was the most tremendous and magnificent avalanche I had seen.

Gradually the cloud settled. The black crows were still perched unmoved, safe on their high slopes. Before the three cameras had got filled with snow dust, they had managed to take some fine snapshots of the avalanche.

As the air cleared, I noticed how for hundreds of feet it had buried deep under its crumbled snow mass the little dark line of footprints which had been made not twenty minutes before. . . .

I turned back to the base camp—to find myself again in the idyll. Bright autumn days, nights of warm, safe sleep, good food.

But for the men—

### III

As they went on, the going grew continually softer and more difficult. Now that the crevasses of the summer had opened, they had continually to find new ways among the great ice-towers. At one place, they must creep crouching under overhanging walls of ice, and then climb almost straight up a snow wall. There was a long rest for the coolies, in the middle of these evolutions. The distance between Camp One and Camp Two had never seemed longer or steeper.

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

As the rise steepened, Herron and Wiessner, leading, found that the layer of soft fresh snow slipped away underfoot, at every step, from the frozen surface beneath. It was like walking up a treadmill. Frequently the first man had to clear off all the new-fallen snow, and cut steps in the ice below. The coolie between Herron and Wiessner, whose boots were badly nailed, must several times be pulled up, by main strength, on the rope.

The coolies were growing steadily slower, and more sulky, and the sahibs were putting all of themselves into it. Morally as well as physically, they must drag the porters up the mountain, with the force of their own unbreakable will and purpose. It was back-breaking work, for shoulders only a little less heavily loaded than the coolies', fighting and tramping a way up the rise, through that deep soft snow; but, worse than that, it was heart-breaking work. The physical energy used was nothing to the nervous energy. Merkl's voice was pleasantly commanding; Herron spent himself in earnest friendliness; Wiessner went through prodigies of bluff good humor: all of them continually urging on those twelve flagging men.

They reached Camp Two at seven o'clock—ten and a half hours, wading through deep snow, instead of the customary easy four to six.

Everything seemed to be making difficulties, little things as well as big. After their day's long battle with bad snow and coolies, they found now that one of the tents would not stay upright. They worked with it a long time, bracing it as best they could with ice-axes. Still its eaves flapped too low for comfort. To keep the coolies as healthy and good-natured as possible was the vital thing. So the three sahibs took the undesirable tent, themselves. Between the physical discomfort of it, their nervous fatigue, and the keen

## *The Final Attack*

---

excitement of hope, they did not sleep a great deal that night.

When snow conditions were proving so bad, it might have seemed natural to begin to think of the possibility of giving up. But the idea did not occur to any of them. They rose next morning, and went on.

And the route to Camp Three was another day.—Sinking knee-deep in soft snow at every step on the level, slipping and step-cutting on the slopes, with weakening coolies always. As they went higher, their feet, continually in the chill of the deep snow, numbed and froze very quickly. At least every half hour the men must stop and take off their boots, and rub them. It was a grim business.

They thought of the long-ago days at the beginning of July, when they had first come up the mountain. Then they had not been acclimated, as they were now. They could never have fought through such going as this. But how they longed for that hard-frozen morning snow! As they looked back to that earlier time, it was like remembering childhood—something bright and far away, before disillusionment began. Yet, in spite of everything, today was better. They felt strong, and ready for the coming fight. Now, at last, they were about to reap the reward of all those months of effort and of waiting. They plodded on and on.

Seven hours it took, of the hardest work, to reach Camp Three, that short stage. The only variety of their heavy journey was furnished by Shukar-Ali the Astori, on Merkl's rope, who broke through a snowbridge into a crevasse. Which, on this route, was not even news.

At Camp Three, another restless night for the climbers, pulled taut between exhaustion and hope.

The snow was steadily deepening as they went higher—ominously reminiscent of the powder of the Mulde. Above

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

Camp Three they forged along thigh-deep, and in one place they sank to their breasts. At two o'clock that afternoon, in the midst of a driving snow scud, still going strongly after the three days, they stepped across the last crevasse, breasted the last steep little pitch, and drew breath on the familiar rolling white plateau where Camp Four stood.

Even this was not the end of their work. Here, too, the storm had brought trouble. The three little tents sagged, almost buried under the snowfall, and the two ice caves were lost completely, their entrances filled up level. The sleeping ice cave was abandoned for good, but the kitchen, with its stove, provisions, and dishes, must be dug out—grueling work with the shovels. It took over an hour, just to locate and unearth the stove.

But finally everything was finished. Housekeeping could begin again in the same old spot; only with a Hunza coolie, Azil, acting as cook, since Ramana had bad feet and had not come up. And this time the stay was to be only a very temporary affair—a rest of one day. Then they would start, actually start on the final attack. This grinding pull to Camp Four had been just the inevitable preliminary, the familiar route and thoroughfare to the familiar settlement. Beyond, began the real work; at last, at long last, they would be off; above, waited the summit!

### IV

They lay about luxuriously in the dim brownish light of the tent, thoroughly enjoying their day of rest. For breakfast, for lunch, and for dinner they regaled themselves on the leg of mutton and potatoes which they had brought from the base camp. This fresh food of civilization possessed rare charms in the wild snowy wastes of

## *The Final Attack*

---

Camp Four. Between meals, Wiessner looked over for the nth time Frier's old London *Weekly Times*. Merkl, with occasional consultations with the others, jotted down in his DAHE book memoranda about the carrying down of equipment, complete with figures of weight and division into loads, for use on the way back from the final push. Herron composed a poem, "*La Cresta dei Dementi*," and smiled good-humoredly when the others made fun of his unmanly occupation. Everything was going well at last. "Tomorrow we will start," said the poem. Or he happily noted down for my newspapers all the favoring circumstances of the situation. "As far as health, and adaptation to altitude, we find ourselves much better and stronger, even after the strenuous ascent to here and sleepless nights, than before descending. . . . Extraordinary as it may seem, I notice no difference in breathing (speed or irregularity) from that in the base camp. . . . We arrived here yesterday in a snow-storm, while we could see now and again that higher on Nanga Parbat the finest weather was reigning. In the evening it cleared up beautifully here. . . . No coolie has got sick so far, though most of them had frozen feet upon arriving here, and they seem in pleasant humor."

During the day the men walked a few steps up the plateau, to see if the snow there had settled and frozen any better than on the way up. Regretfully, they found it had not. They sank in, a foot or more, at every step. There would be real work ahead. No easy promenade to the summit. But for all that they were ready, keyed up to fighting pitch. It was even a tremendous relief to look forward to, after over a month of the nerve strain of enforced inactivity. It was a cheerful day, a day full of rising exaltation, with hopes so long deferred now at last about to be realized.

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

“Tomorrow we will start  
And we will return  
With the ridge conquered,  
And perhaps the mountain...”

### v

Toward the end of that afternoon, the brightness of sure victory began to dim. The weather was going back on them; clouds were gathering in the west. And mournful coolies came drifting, in ones and twos, to the sahibs' tent. “*Bima! Bima!* (Sick! Sick!)”—that most familiar music of Camp Four, they whined.

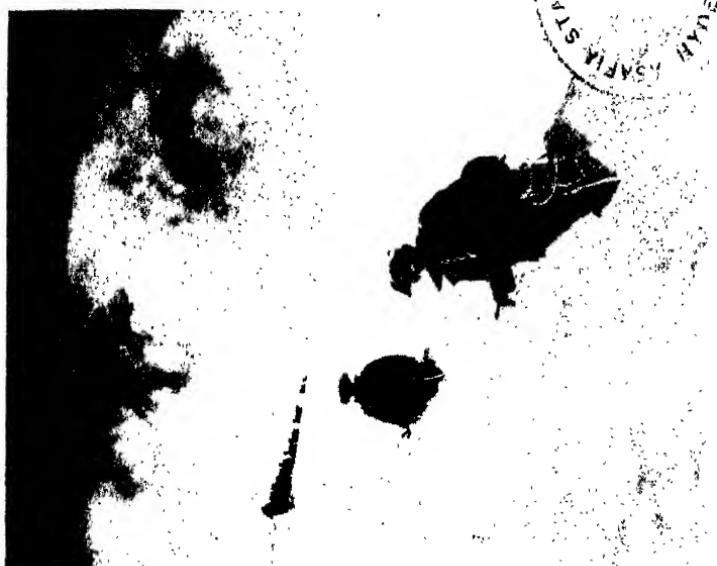
By evening, Herron was noting: “Things again look black. The weather seems turning bad, and 9 (nine!) coolies declare themselves ill.”

When the climbers opened their eyes the next morning, the tent was still in dark twilight. It was snowing!

The snow must have been falling all night, it had piled so high already outside the tent. The great accumulation of the long storm seemed nothing, to what had come in just this one night. Still through the day it kept falling. They watched it, hour after hour, by the gap in the tent-flaps—hurrying down through the thick air, and heaping higher and higher. . . . Every moment of it seemed to bury more deeply their chances of success.

Never had the men seen snow collect so fast. It was weird, uncanny, like some horrible portent, outside the ordinary course of nature. They had worked and hoped for so long, they had fought through so many things. Now, they said, it seemed to them in their discouragement as if the mountain itself were punishing them for their striving.

During that day, September 1st, “The situation looks hopeless,” Herron wrote. But not yet did they give up.



"THEY DREW BREATH ON THE  
FAMILIAR PLATEAU WHERE CAMP  
FOUR STOOD"



"THE TENTS WERE ALMOST BURIED  
UNDER THE SNOWFALL"



## *The Final Attack*

---

They decided to fight it through. Their wills had been clenched so long on this one thing. It would be almost impossible to let go.

The nine coolies did not get any better. The three others came to declare that they too would not go on. They were tired of the mountain and everything concerned with the mountain. The snow kept on falling.

That evening there was a brief discussion. Events had conquered. The refusal of the coolies was the final argument. "Push on! push on!" said the climbers' feelings. But to push on, without coolies, through new snow, snow which even if they should wait, still in these winter conditions would never harden.—The discussion was brief. How could it be otherwise? There was really nothing left to discuss. It was hopeless. . . . It was finished. . . .

The rest of the evening in the tent was very silent. There was the quiet of a funeral, as if they were sitting by the body of some one dead. It felt like death. The death of a most vital part of themselves.

### VI

All night it snowed. Next morning dawned bright and clear. But never had any one seen so much snow. The men wormed their way out of the half-buried tent, and found themselves in powder to their waists.

They looked up at the sweep of whiteness that rose to Rakiot Peak, and high against the blue, the Ridge. There it all was, waiting, dazzling in the bright sunlight. Camp Five, Camp Six, Camp Seven, and beyond. . . . That was the way they should now be planning to go—not toward the base camp. Might it not still be possible, by sheer will, to conquer the impossible? Herron faced toward the sum-

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

mit, and began to struggle up the plateau.—He did not advance ten feet. On this upslope, he floundered breathless, in powder snow to his breast. He turned back. The others were laughing grimly at the ridiculous hopelessness of it all.

They had been keyed to a desperate fight. There could not even be any fighting. No final heroic effort toward the summit, to relieve the long pressure of desire. This was, simply, the end. . . .

Now they began to think, half-indifferent and half-uneasy, about the steep slopes and avalanche possibilities below them. They rather wondered whether they would ever get down alive.

---

## *Chapter XXI*

### BASE CAMP IDYLL—CONCLUDED

#### I

FOR us at the base camp, the idyll still went on. The days passed, slowly but brightly. The storms the men met above were only local; we did not even know about them. There was always sunshine on the red and tawny meadows, and the bright white snow of the lesser peaks.

Every morning the Jemadar came to borrow the field glasses, and went off with attendant coolies to near-by hilltops, from which one could see portions of the route on the mountain. There he would spend hours gazing. But never a trace of the party did he see. And no coolies came down with messages. It was as if they had indeed been all buried by an avalanche, or swallowed in a crevasse. Not that any one thought for a moment that they had. In that glorious autumn weather, made for victorious living, it would have seemed too ridiculously unlikely.

Soon the time came to send up another rope of coolies with extra rations—loads of flat chappatis for the porters above, and a sort of Christmas box for the climbers. The little white sheep must be condemned to die, and his big brown-colored companion, with black face and feet, baa-ed for loneliness for the next day or two. He followed the Cook's Assistant pathetically around, close at his heels like a dog, and was finally fed with salt to console his sorrow.

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

Meanwhile the legs of his companion were roasted, by the interested and sympathetic Old Cook, "for the sahibs."

"And bread for sahibs?"

"Yes, bread. *Bot* (much) bread." Atta scones were baked. And a few little delicacies they might be running out of were added—extra jam, and cocoa. The Cook brought me the food he had prepared. The Jemadar came with him, all interest, and helped me find a bristol-board "bokkus." He was sure the one I had chosen was too small. Hunzas drifted up, and when we proved short of food bags, hunted round the camp and picked up for me scraps of discarded newspapers, and bits of string, to wrap the bread and meat in. As I wrapped, the Jemadar put things in the "bokkus," while all the coolies leaned over his shoulder and made suggestions as to the arrangement of the parcels, and vied with one another in speaking of more things to send up to the sahibs.

"*Chai?* (tea?)."

"*Upar bot hai.* (There is some above.)"

"*Chini?* (sugar?)."

"*Bot. Bot* (Much. Much.)"

"Cigarette?"

When everything was finally packed to the complete satisfaction of everybody, I brought out the mail in a big envelope, and laid it on top.

"*Dak!*" This was the finishing touch, the final note that completed the picture. "*Attcha! Attcha!*" And it was all smiles, as I handed the box to the Jemadar, ready to be taken up early next morning. . . .

Sometimes interruptions would come to this idyllic atmosphere. Coolies would approach me, demanding plaintively everything from shirts to shoestrings, talking on and on in incomprehensible Urdu, pulling their clothes open

## Base Camp Idyll—Concluded

---

to exhibit their need. And generally I would not have what they needed. That was not idyllic.

“——ne hai.——ne hai (I haven’t——),” firm on one side, persistent long-continued begging on the other, arguing, complaining. But at last the facts of the case would win, over all persistence; the men would give up, and the peace return again. Bright autumn days, nights of safe warm sleep, good food. . . .

### II

On August 31st, I saw an amazing figure coming across the meadow—a European figure, obviously, in shorts and an incongruous gray city cap. As he came nearer, I made out, under the cap, a face pale and clean-shaven, looking even more incongruously citified than the headgear, after the burned and bearded climbers. It was Kunigk!

Every one had expected that when he recovered sufficiently from his operation, he would sail for Europe with the others. But that was not Kunigk’s idea at all. He was not, he said, going tamely back home, while “his friends were still working on the mountain.” Twelve days after his successful appendicitis operation, he had begun riding Lieutenant Frier’s polo ponies in Gilgit, and on August 21st had started to ride the three days back to Doyan. There, he had waited a day or so for sure news, since rumors were flying round that all of the Expedition had given up and left. When our presence at the base camp was established, he had walked over the ridges in two days and a fraction—rather better speed than that made by the dak runner—and here he was, all ready to start up the mountain. I was obliged to dash his hopes somewhat, for as he came into camp, the Hunzas had told him that a party of coolies

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

with rations was starting "kal," and he was all happily set to go with them next day. Unfortunately "kal" in Urdu may mean either "tomorrow" or "yesterday." In this case it had meant "yesterday" and the party had already gone. He must settle down with what patience he could muster, to await the departure of the next rope of coolies; which would not be until some message with orders had come down from the heights.

Meanwhile, he made a pleasant addition to the lotus-eating life of the base camp; joined the Jemadar with the morning field glasses while I wrote, and in the afternoon whiled away the hours with epics of the Indus valley, and long interesting tales of the folkways and customs of that strange race, the military English of Gilgit. And together, hour after hour, we watched the Moraine Hill for approaching coolies.

The sun still shone, and more days went by.

### III

On September 2nd we were sitting by the bonfire just after sunset, finishing our dinner, when we heard a shout from the top of the Moraine Hill.

"The first lot of coolies are coming back with messages!"

Dimly in the gray light, we could see three or four little figures, high against the skyline. The Jemadar and the other Hunzas came running to the foot of the hill.

"Not coolie," they said. "Sahib. Sahib." We knew their keenness, and did not question their recognition of voices. But "Sahib"! What could it mean? A sahib, returning with three coolies. We speculated wildly as we waited.—Illness, at best. Or new complications? defeat and disaster? Why? And who was it?

## *Base Camp Idyll—Concluded*

---

The far dim figures were coming down fast, and the sahib shouted again. Now we could recognize Wiessner's voice. We saw through the thickening dusk, how he was running, leaping and sliding down the steep hummocky grass. We moved forward, away from the bonfire, to meet him. The moments seemed long until he came really within earshot. Then he called words. And we knew.

"Nanga Parbat 'finish'!" he called. There was a sound of forced cheerfulness in his voice. Of course, he realized that for the Jemadar and the coolies it would be the best of news.

"Nanga Parbat 'finish'!" It was as if, while we were still looking at all those elaborate bright pictures of success which hope had to the last moment kept lighted for us, in spite of the ominous figures on the hillside, suddenly a black door shut, and we were left in darkness.

"Nanga Parbat 'finish.' "...

### IV

The others were all safe, coming behind, said Wiessner. The servants arranged the circle of zwieback tins, and brought more food, ready for the sahibs when they should arrive; and the base camp coolies stood about, waiting to greet their companions. Slowly the porters came straggling in to the light of the bonfire, through the darkness—in groups of twos and threes, with long intervals between. They took off their loads, and left them, and moved over to their own fire, with the silence of very tired men. As they came, we counted them. Merkl appeared with a group, his face gray and drawn with exhaustion. At last the count of coolies was complete. With the very latest stragglers came Herron. He walked up to the fire slowly and heavily.

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

His sunburned, bearded face was deeply lined, like that of an old man, and he was very quiet.

They ate and rested, and gradually they told us what had happened. Wiessner, with a false voice of noisy good-humor, at first did most of the talking. Later Merkl, cheered by food, joined in. Kunigk and I eagerly asked questions. Herron spoke very little, giving only factual details.

They told about their three days' struggle to reach Camp Four,—so long ago it seemed, while there still was hope. They told about the sick coolies, and the snow, the terrible snow that fell and fell. The efforts of going up, which had seemed so great, proved nothing to the coming down. . . . They spoke of the snow with excitement and almost with awe, interrupting one another to emphasize its quantity and softness. Never had they seen so much snow.

They regretted the things that had had to be abandoned in the upper camps. They named them over, back and forth, remembering more and more—tents, and sleeping bags, and stoves, food and equipment, all sorts of cherished personal possessions, a valuable camera with films already exposed, and, most important of all, an altimeter lent by the Meteorological Institute of Prussia. There they were, up there, at Camps Five, and Six, and Seven, safe under the snow. There they all were. But what could the climbers do about it? And they spoke again, almost with horror, of the terrible snow.

They told of the trip down. Plowing steadily through the snow, to the waist, to the breast. The coolies, following, walked not in a path but in a trench. For the smaller coolies, only their heads were above the surface. If any of them inadvertently stepped off the edge of the hard-trodden footprints, they fell and floundered completely helpless in the soft depths, until aided by their companions. On the steep

## *Base Camp Idyll—Concluded*

---

places, the sahibs, leading, went sliding down in avalanches of huge masses of snow, fortunately avalanches that spread over only a small area before stopping again, so that they were never actually buried, or swept into crevasses. Even by Camp Three, they were completely exhausted. And Camp Three is only the beginning, not the first quarter of the way.

Below Camp Three it proved even worse.

... But now, they were down, it was over. They had told now how it happened. They did not wish to talk about it any more.

Yes, they had found at Camp Three the coolies we had sent up, with the mail, and mutton, and bread, all so carefully packed, with such eager attention. They had taken out the mail, barely glanced at the rest of the things, and left them in the snow.

There was not much sleep for any one that night. Finally, after long silences, we turned from the dying fire and went to our tents. There, talking continued until almost dawn.

### v

The most spectacular event of the descent, Wiessner's narrow escape from death, did not come out at all, until later. Only next morning when I was going over everything in detail for my newspaper account, I heard of Wiessner's fifty-foot fall into a crevasse. The drama of this near-catastrophe had been quite lost for the men, the incident passed over and forgotten, in the general darkness of the defeat.

It was at the very last, between Camps One and Two, Herron now told the story.—Wiessner himself seemed to feel it an affair a little too spectacular for a respectable

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

climber to have had part in, and would say almost nothing about it.—The snow was a little better there, and they were coming very fast, to get down before night. They were hurrying along, dead tired, and panting—as if trying to rush away as fast as they could from the whole business, all their troubles, and disappointments, and final defeat—“No, don’t put that in. The newspapers don’t need that,” Herron interrupted himself. Well, anyway, they were hurrying along, Wiessner leading, Herron second, on a serac beside a crevasse, the regular route all summer. Suddenly the whole side of the serac, a piece of several tons, broke off, dropping away from under Wiessner’s feet. He seemed almost to hang an instant in midair, then vanished from sight into the crevasse, in a whirl of ice-blocks and great icicles. He fell fifty to sixty feet. Toward the end, Herron was able to brake a little with the icy rope, but not to hold completely.

After Wiessner had fallen, Herron and Merkl stood there, aghast and helpless. They thought that either the fall or the ice-blocks must have killed him. But they could not go near the edge to see—it might break off under them, and bury him below. They could only wait. It seemed a long time that they waited. . . . At last they heard a faint shout, and knew that he was alive.

Wiessner had been stunned for a moment by some of the smaller blocks, but the largest had missed him. Now he came to, to find himself with an arm that hurt so much he thought it might be broken, and well bruised all over, but otherwise intact. He was lying on a shelf part way down the crevasse, under an overhang of ice fringed with giant icicles, some of them eight or ten feet long and as big as barrels. The rope led up over the overhang, and the least pulling might break off some of these tons of ice,

## *Base Camp Idyll—Concluded*

---

to crash down upon him. He hurried to untie the knot at his waist.

Now the rope swung loose: the others could not help him. Bad arm, shock, bruises, and all, he must cut himself steps, and climb out. It was, Herron said, a remarkably brilliant display of icemanship. About halfway up, he reached another shelf, from which the two could get him up the rest of the way with the rope.

He rested a little, and they came on down.

### VI

#### *Change \**

Radiant, radiant was the early morning,  
And gay in the first sun the damp grass glistened,  
And the little flowers on the high slope, and the patches of  
still-fresh snow,  
And up in the sky, laughing,  
In its white magnificence, the Mountain!  
My knees, my legs, my feet rejoiced,  
My whole being rejoiced in the climbing  
Toward the gay fluted snows, white and blinding,  
Of the tremendous Mountain.  
Lightly I climbed under my heavy sack,  
Hope in my heart,  
Consciousness of my great purpose in my exulting spirit,  
The sun bright in my eyes . . .

And the eye dominated,  
And the spirit dominated,

\* Literally translated from the Italian. See Appendix E, page 328.

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

And the heart was master;  
And the strong, restrained step,  
Moving on slowly, relentlessly,  
Rejoicing, rejoicing,  
Climbed higher and higher  
Up the stairway of the sky . . .

. . . . .

The sun laughed,  
The rock, the flower,  
The serac, the Mountain,  
The sky,—and we, too . . .  
—Everything laughed.—

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*       \*

... Night.  
My feet ache,  
My shoes hurt,  
Hateful, endless,  
Shameful the descent.  
The others are ahead.  
I am the last.  
I do not want to run.  
At the bottom, down there,  
The yellow fire of the camp.  
I sit on the grass.  
I am alone, in the dark.  
I bend my head.  
It is the last time that I am on the Mountain,  
That I touch its soil.  
I bend my head  
Down to the grass, down to the earth,  
And I kiss it.  
While at the bottom,

## *Base Camp Idyll—Concluded*

---

Down there,  
Near the fire the others  
Narrate  
Noisily  
Almost in good humor  
The happenings of the shameful defeat. . . .

I should like not to go down,  
Never to go down,  
But to die on the slope,  
My head among the grass and the few flowers,  
Kissing the earth.

I remain sitting looking at the distant flame,  
I remain a long time sitting.  
Then, slowly,  
I resume the descent. . . .

*R. H., September, 1932.*

---

*Chapter XXII*

FINIS

I

THE morning after the defeat. Now it was more than a defeat, it was like a rout. Between eight and ten o'clock at night the men had come down, and they planned to leave that next noon. It is no small matter to break up a two months' camp, and organize a twelve days' trip through the wilderness for three separate groups of people. But it was done.

After a late breakfast for tired climbers and coolies, tent poles were pulled out in a hurry, tents were collapsed, and rapidly rolled up, personal belongings were stuffed into sacks. Then medical supplies, photographic supplies, repair kit, provisions, papers, were frantically overhauled, and those not needed thrown away in all directions, till the camp looked like one huge dump heap. Coolies gathered thickly after, picking up the spoils, like vultures swarming on a battlefield. It was not safe to turn one's back for a moment on any of one's things, or some near-by coolie would quickly appropriate them, with the convenient assumption that they had been thrown away. Excelsior and papers strewed the ground, bottles of photographic fixative, bandages, ink, extra food. Bags were packed and locked or tied—everything was done in frenzied haste. After a hurried lunch, the men were ready to start.

Then came for a final appropriate send-off, the usual

coolie trouble. The kitchen had made itself into twelve loads, where only one or two were expected. And as usual, *as usual*, coolies were "*bima*." There were not nearly enough to carry the loads. Much excited talk from coolies and Jemadar. The usual circle of discussion. The usual business of suggestions and arguments. The usual standing and sitting round, and infinite delay. At last the kitchen loads were reduced from twelve to three or four. I volunteered to wait a day, as I had no pressing business and the others had. Coolies were assigned their loads, and with all the usual protest took them, and the men were off. They waved good-by as they vanished for the last time over the rocky knoll toward the valleys. It was over.

II

I had wondered at their haste. It had seemed so much more easy, and reasonable, and pleasant, to wait a day or two, rest a little, pack at one's leisure. But soon I stopped wondering. I understood.

For it was desperately sad at the base camp, after they left. Now that the flurry and bustle were over, the ghosts of all of our hopes through the long months came to haunt me. Every little while I would find myself looking up at the Moraine Hill to see if any coolies were coming, and wondering what news they would bring. Then I would remember.

What the men had learned at Camp Four, I realized now. The camp was like a house where some one lies dead. Not because it was empty of climbers—it had been that often enough before, and still it had been a happy place—but because it was empty of hope. Futility—futility—as it often seems in the last analysis to haunt our lives, so in the

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

most intensified form it haunted that camp. The futility of it all, the waste of human effort—two years of planning, a year of working and elaborating the plan, all the complex scheme of it, the letters, the lists, the actual days and weeks of labor, before we even left Munich. Then the long journey, by ship and rail and motor, saddle horse and pack horse, and afoot with coolies—almost two months of almost continuous travel. The elaborate siege of the mountain, two and a half months of it, all the time and strength of thirty people, all the thoughts and desires of nine of them, put upon this one thing.

And the mountain, scornful of our puny efforts, had carelessly every day or two scattered a few snowflakes on us, and then finally thrown a whole handful. And we could do nothing against it. Everything was ended. The effort was over. Defeat.—Frustration.—Futility.--

### III

I did not finish my packing till late afternoon of the next day, and the Jemadar urged and urged that I stay there for the night.

“*Attcha* here. *Niche* (below) not *attcha*. *Kal, niche.*” He must have thought I was slightly demented, when I insisted on hurrying off down to a valley camp, just before sunset. And my reasons were a little too subtle and psychological to explain to Jemadars in Urdu. But mine was a flight, too. I could not face another night at the base camp. I, too, was routed.

### IV

Next day I began to get back to the normal life and homes of men. Tiny cultivated patches of gravelly soil,



"NANGA PARBAT! . . ."



clinging to the mountainsides among the rocks; a few houses of round stones with flat mud roofs, looking as if they had huddled there for indefinite centuries of sun and storm; and men and women moving about the ordinary work of getting from the earth their daily bread. It looked as if this life had gone on so through immemorial time, and would go on through coming centuries. A hard-working existence in a dry hilly country. But compared with our effort, there seemed something very kind and gracious about it. The earth repaid the people's care with her kindly fruits,—and how good they were—one had forgotten how many and how luscious—the first squash and beans and grapes,—the children laughed and played about, and the grain was being threshed. How different it seemed from our barren endeavor, which even if it had succeeded would have brought no tangible results.

"Will their king pay them a great deal of money if they get to the top of Nanga Parbat?" the shikarri had asked. Defeat, and futility. . . .

Yet I knew, fundamentally, that this was just the reaction after four months of strain, that in that attempt to climb a mountain higher than any ever climbed, that mad unproductive attempt, which no animal but man would consider, there was something infinitely worth doing. Nanga Parbat had called, and the climbers had come. They had known the mountain, they had loved the mountain, they had fought the mountain. They had met hardship and defeat. Yet through that fight, through that intimate relation with something greater than themselves, they had experienced the most concentrated intensity of existence. In a time which puts its emphasis on material values, there, men may still find the banners and the trumpets of living: there, the something beyond. . . .

---

## *Epilogue*

### THE MOUNTAIN AND THE MEN

#### I

**N**ANGA PARBAT still haunted the men, as they turned down into the valleys. Herron wrote of their leaving:

#### *Flight \**

Broken branches,  
Bare trunks,  
Mad contortions of black wood,  
Fixed in tragic postures  
Between the stars of the black sky  
In a world held motionless  
By a sinister enchantment . . .

· · · · ·  
An immense overpowering spirit,  
A transparent lunar whiteness,  
Far and high  
Behind the dead pine trees. . .

Nanga Parbat!  
King of the mountains,  
Lord of all the valleys,  
Tremendous and terrible spirit,

\* Literally translated from the Italian. See Appendix E, page 325.

## *Epilogue—The Mountain and the Men*

---

Hidden by a thousand other mountains,  
In your clouds almost always surrounded,—  
We are in flight.  
And at our departure  
In a new enchantment  
Still you hold us,  
As in your forest at night,  
We three men  
Beaten and lost and stooping,  
Feeling our way, wander under our sacks,  
Stumbling over a thousand branches  
And prostrate trunks.  
And now and again,  
Beaten men,  
Because of tired grief and depression ready  
to be fascinated,  
We raise our eyes,  
And we see you tonight,  
Crystalline and pure and unmoving,  
In the upper sky—  
Like a spirit part  
Of the sky itself....

*R. H., September, 1932.*

## II

Still the mountain was with them, a part of their lives, which they could never escape. They knew that they would come back and try again, another year.

Already, even in the funereal gloom of Camp Four, they had begun to talk of "next year." Now, while the other two men had to hurry home to Germany, Herron and Wiessner began to make definite arrangements for a return.

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

They saw the government in Kashmir about official permission, and found it very friendly to the suggestion. We three went over to Darjeeling, and with the invaluable help of Wood-Johnson of Kanchenjunga and Everest, coolies were engaged, and their headman was introduced to his future employers.

Long hours on the trains went by in detailed discussion of plans. There would be a few minor changes in equipment and provisions and methods. Hunza porters would not be used again. Few, if any, ice-caves would be dug. The same route would be used and the same camps: no time would need to be lost in finding the way. The Bhotia and Sherpa coolies should, by all accounts, prove at least moderately reliable and useful.

### III

We worked out an elaborate practical campaign. Granted the most effective organization and equipment, and no loss of time in experimenting, all of which our previous experience should make possible, and the moderately reliable transport of the Eastern Himalayan coolies, snow would be the major problem of Nanga Parbat. Here was the technical difficulty that distinguished the methods of attack necessary, from those used on other great Himalayan peaks. Snow—always present as an objective danger, in avalanches. Our technical knowledge of safe route-finding had proved indispensable for that. Snow—deep and soft powder to be fought through, on the upper parts of the route, even in the best of weather. Against this, light American snow-shoes might perhaps prove useful, and certainly short skis for the summit plateau. Snow—always a menace in storms, slowing porter traffic down or holding it up entirely for

## *Epilogue—The Mountain and the Men*

---

some time afterward, by the difficult going, and spreading the threat of avalanches to even the mildest slopes. With proper equipment, porters might move over certain limited portions of the route even during the gentle warm storms. Our experience had taught us a little of the ways of this mountain, and of what we might expect.

We dreamed of an expedition "next year," where, unhampered by all our present complications, trail-breaking and transport would always work together, ropes of coolies with provisions would stand always ready to support the sahib-leaders, and everything would move forward as it should. With passable conditions, and even moderate luck, the climbers might well hope.

The will that had carried them through the summer still pushed them on. The mountain had won this time, but they would come back. Again and again, if it should be necessary, they would come back.

"It seems odd, doesn't it, to talk about its being 'necessary' to climb a mountain," said Herron. "But this really is. I shall never be able to rest till we get to the top of Nanga Parbat."

All the chances looked bright for "next year."

## IV

On our way home from the mountain, Herron made a day's excursion to Cairo, and climbed the Second Pyramid. Running down its steep side, he slipped. He fell three hundred feet, and was instantly killed. . . .

Beyond the Vale of Kashmir Nanga Parbat still waits. White and beautiful in its snowy loneliness, it waits for its conquerors. Men will surely come again some day; others will know the great moments of mountaineering,

## *The Naked Mountain*

---

perhaps even the greatest, that when the summit is gained.  
... This Expedition is over.

Through the summer, Nanga Parbat showed itself to us a kindly mountain, claiming no lives. But the most eager of its lovers and attackers paid with his life at the end.



*Rand Herron*  
~~~~~

RAND HERRON

1902-1932

I

FOR this story of our Expedition, I am especially indebted to Rand Herron; without his assistance it could never have been written.

I started to work on it during the summer, always with his interest and coöperation and comment. He furnished, also, much of my material, supplying me, either by word of mouth or in long carefully detailed notes, with the greater part of those facts which I could not be present to know myself. Though others have aided me greatly in the writing, what he had already given has made the book possible. If it contains anything of worth or interest, the chief credit should be his. . . .

II

The life of Elbridge Rand Herron, though brief, was full of color and adventure.

He had an unusual background and education. He was born in Pegli, Italy, July 23, 1902, of American parents, his father Professor George Herron, well-known Socialist and internationalist, his mother Caroline Rand, of a wealthy and social-minded western family, daughter of the founder of the Rand School in New York. His childhood was a happy one, spent in a beautiful old villa with gardens, out-

The Naked Mountain

side Florence; his parents entertained there freely and he had glimpses of many interesting and famous people. When he was twelve, his mother, to whom he was devoted, died. After her death, his father moved to Geneva, where he was in school for eight years. They returned to Florence, and he entered the University, specializing in philosophy and in music. From his earliest childhood this latter had been one of his two greatest passions.

For the rest of his life he was to devote his winters to his music, studying it and working with it—in Rome, in Vienna, where he won a teacher's diploma in piano and in composition, in Berlin, where he took up the harpsichord, in Munich, in Moscow.

The other chief interest of his life was mountaineering. Even as a boy, he had always longed to climb, and had made a large collection of mountain pictures. But family complications had prevented it. Now every summer he climbed. He sampled half the major and minor ranges of Europe, by long and difficult routes or first ascents, and he took part in mountaineering and exploring expeditions, from the High Atlas in Morocco, to the Russian Caucasus, and to Lapland in winter, where he traveled eight hundred miles on skis.

In 1929, he came to America for the first time since early childhood, and settled down to spend his winters in New York. Here he started flying, and got his pilot's license. He had also taken part in motorcycle racing, in Vienna.

In 1931, he organized with Italian friends a climbing expedition to the Pamirs in Central Asia, but it was stopped at the last moment by refusal of permission from the Soviet government.

Next year he joined the group for Nanga Parbat, his last expedition.

III

We were on the steamer, returning from India.

Just after midnight on October 13, 1932, we left the boat at Suez, for a day's sight-seeing in Egypt, to rejoin it that same evening at Port Said. At Gizeh before breakfast we climbed the First Pyramid, which Herron enjoyed keenly. Then he announced his intention of climbing the Second, too.

"Why bother?" said I.

"See how fine that one looks, from this one. Think how beautiful this will be from that," he joked. "Then I've heard that that smooth coping at the top is really difficult,—interesting climbing. Very few people ever do it. How can anybody *bear*"—he was half-laughing at his grandiloquent outburst, but he half-meant it, too—"not to do everything in the world, that anybody else can do!—I mean, in his own line, of course," he qualified, "like climbing."

There seemed no time to get in the Second Pyramid, however, unless he left out some sight-seeing, and he never wanted to miss anything. But after breakfast there was a little delay. He was off like an arrow—"Now is my chance for the Second Pyramid!"

He had climbed the hard part with great pleasure and amusement, the guide said afterward, and on top had solemnly shaken hands with him, and congratulated him on the ascent—the regular ceremony on reaching the summit of a specially difficult mountain. They had come down carefully, to where it began to be easy again. Then he had exultantly commenced to run—as already that morning he had gone leaping down the First Pyramid.

"Why do you like to go so fast, in climbing?" I had once asked him.

The Naked Mountain

"It's because I'm enjoying myself so much," he had said. "It's like eating something that tastes so good you can't get it down fast enough." A loose pebble on a sloping block, as he ran, a slip, and he fell down the side, about three hundred feet.

He was buried that afternoon in the Cemetery at Cairo.

IV

It is very hard to convey in words anything of the living color of a vital personality. Of Rand Herron a casual acquaintance wrote: "With him, has passed for me some of the glamour of life. . . ." A description of him is likely to sound rather like a sort of idealized abstraction—"The Death of Beautiful and Gifted Youth." Yet to put down any of those little concrete things that made him a real person, intensely alive and intensely individual, is a difficult sort of undertaking.

V

To tell a little of his superficial effect might be of some value.

He had enormous charm—that incommunicable quality, which one can only testify to, but can never show, or prove.

As to appearance—thick black wavy hair, and alert dark-brown eyes, sometimes sober and thoughtful, sometimes actually sparkling with life and mischief. In the high curve of the cheeks, a suggestion of the gamin, and frequently an impish smile—counterbalanced by a strong nose, and a mature mouth in repose. A tall, well-formed body, with an easy animal naturalness of carriage and movement; and a bend of the head when listening, like a sensitive animal,



Rand Herron

responsive and intent. He had also much of the animal's complete relaxation, when quiet. A voice and manner generally a little shy and hesitating, with strangers. With his intimates, continually changing, vividly reflecting his changing moods.

VI

He had an appetite for living, as catholic and voracious as his appetite for food. We made between us a litany of foods, one day—"I like French cooking,"—"and Italian cooking,—" "and German cooking,—" "and Swedish cooking—" and so on, around the world. So he enjoyed, intensely and with discrimination, all sorts of life—the healthy simplicities of the outdoors, the hardships of mountaineering, Oriental luxury, or city sophistications. He loved all sorts of places—mountains attracted him hardly more than the desert, or the jungle, or the sea. Among people, he liked especially peasants, and the highly cultured—he had a ridiculously violent prejudice against the petit bourgeois, who to him stood for prim conventionality, intolerance, and a general stodgy rigidity and ugliness of living. To this he consciously opposed the Greek love of the body, and its worship of all forms of physical and natural beauty. . . .

For all his surface vehemencies, there was a fundamental serenity about him—a fundamental sanity and balance, an adjustment to and acceptance of life, as natural and unforced as the sun shining. Mentally, it showed in a philosophical reception of the inevitable, and a kind, intelligent tolerance; emotionally, in a gay good-temper, that nothing could stir to more than a momentary surface annoyance. . . .

In contacts with others, he was notable for a quick, gentle sympathy and an eager readiness to do things for people: nothing ever seemed to exhaust his energy and goodwill.

The Naked Mountain

VII

Only once, for his younger brother's benefit, Herron tried very informally to express his philosophy of living. He found that, considered in relation to infinity, human effort appears worthless. But "we must *transcend* these just considerations." . . . We must go on—"with all good intentions and enthusiasms."

To those who knew him, that last quaint phrase perfectly expresses the way he lived.

VIII

Herron was unusually gifted and versatile.

To abstract subjects—social, political, æsthetic—he brought a fine and flexible mind, a warm live interest, and a feeling for fundamental values. It was amusing to hear him argue with equal zest on almost any side of almost any question; always in favor of open-minded intelligence, against narrowness and dogmatism: he was hotly intolerant of intolerance. In judgments concerning himself, he managed to keep generally the same cheerful objectivity and impartiality.

He had a flair for languages, and knew something of eleven. Four of these—Italian, learned in childhood and always his favorite, English, used in his home, French, at his Geneva schools, and German, during his stay in that country—he spoke without accent, absolutely freely and interchangeably; though his written English had often a slight foreign flavor.

Well informed in general, he showed on his special subject of interest, ancient Greece, a knowledge that was thorough and exhaustive, covering its philosophy, art and

Rand Herron

life: it was a land and a time that was completely congenial to him.

He was probably most important as the artist—the lover of beauty, and its creator. *Genius* is a word to be used only very carefully, but to most of those who knew him more than casually, he seems to have given a definite impression of having at least a faint touch of the real thing. He certainly had what often goes with it—tremendous vitality and ambition, and a capacity for hard intense work.

He was very prolific, in various lines. Beside many scattered Italian poems, he has left a half-completed novel. In music, his vocation, he was not only a finished performer on the piano, the harpsichord, and the organ, and a delightful improvisor. His greatest gift of all was undoubtedly for musically creative work, and there is half a trunkful of his music in manuscript. Already compositions of his have been performed in Florence and in Moscow, and musicians have said that he showed promise of becoming an outstanding composer.

IX

As a mountaineer, Herron was just beginning to come into his full powers. He had been able to start climbing late, only seven years before. But as soon as the opportunity had come, he had thrown himself into it whole-heartedly, making very long as well as very technically difficult climbs, and carrying them through successfully. At first, even during this summer, he sometimes in his enthusiasm pushed himself too far, to the point of over-fatigue; but as the summer went on he learned more to hold himself in, while his physical strength was daily increasing with the calls upon it, and his muscles were continually hardening with use.

“He was a strong climber this year, but he would have

The Naked Mountain

been very, very strong indeed next year," said one of his companions regretfully.

Considered technically, he was specially good on rocks. He keenly enjoyed the delicate grips and balances, the violent muscular effort, the excitements and dangers of rock-climbing. Ice, with its call for climbing skill and knowledge, also delighted him. Snow he accepted, as part of the pleasure of the mountain.

In route-finding he had had much practice, both in leading and in solo-climbing, in many of his hundred and forty some ascents; and his ability is witnessed by the fact that the route on Nanga Parbat which he and Kunigk, alternating lead, worked out through dangerous terrain from the base up through the ice-fall to Camp Two, and then among the seracs from Two to Three, was that used, with only necessary changes from opening crevasses, by the Expedition all summer.

He had had practice in organizing and in leading expeditions, and could keep a fine grasp of the infinite minutiae of detail, while never losing sight of the thing as a whole. He proved always a 'thoroughly sound man,' as efficient and dependable as he was enthusiastic. With the coolies, he showed himself kind, patient, understanding; with the other climbers "*ein guter Bergkamerad*," always ready to take more than his share of work or responsibility.

In the high-altitude climbing, he acclimated well, as to heart and blood pressure, kept his appetite, and was seldom sick. More important even than the bodily fitness, he had the will for high-altitude work—the passion, the determination, the spiritual as well as the physical staying power. He was not of that physical type that is born 'strong as an ox,' and never knows what it is to be tired. With men of that type, there is always possibility of a crumpling, the first



RAND HERRON

|

|

Rand Herron

time fatigue does overpower them, since they have never had the chance to develop the spiritual resistances necessary to push through. Of course men who do big Himalayan climbing successfully must be very strong in body, and of great endurance. But such climbers as Mallory was, as Herron was developing into, are outstanding examples of the fact that the right temperament is even more essential.

Herron's character resembled in many respects that of Mallory, as it is described. It is interesting that, like Mallory, he always dreamed of Everest, "because it was 'the highest.'" All his climbing was with Everest in view, and although he became gripped and held by Nanga Parbat, he joined the Expedition originally as a "training climb" for the greatest peak. He always hoped and planned some day to organize his own expedition for it and had things already under way.

With his combination of ability and ambition, he would probably have become one of the really great mountaineers.

x

After Herron's death, his friends wrote of him, in the journals of various climbing clubs of which he was a member.

From *Alpinisme*, organ of the Groupe de Haute Montagne, one of the greatest international groups of mountaineers:

... "He practised, with equal finish and elegance, alpinism with and without guides, with companions of all nationalities. . . Better than long commentaries, the list of his most important climbs gives an idea of his magnificent career: * . . .

"He leaves with all those who knew him, French, Italians, Germans, amateurs and guides, the memory of a young and charming companion, of inexhaustible ardor and enthusiasm."

* See Appendix F.

The Naked Mountain

From *Rivista Mensile*, organ of the Italian Alpine Club:

"An exceptional passion for nature drove the young American to visit all possible mountains, and resulted in an extraordinary activity....

"...and when our expedition (the projected expedition to the Pamirs) was forbidden by a foreign power, he took all possible steps, even to a trip to Moscow to obtain the impossible revocation of the prohibition! That paints the character of the man—to attack to the end, for his own ideal....

"...A musician of worth...his personality and musical feeling made him strangely sensitive emotionally during climbs. It might be said that he felt the mountains musically, to the point of sometimes leaving his impressions written in musical phrases..."

In *Der Bayerlander*, organ of the Sektion Bayerland of the German and Austrian Alpine Club, Willy Merkl said of him on our Expedition:

"From the beginning to the end he had led in the siege of Nanga Parbat, always fighting in the front line..."

"He was the ideal person for a great expedition; always of even-tempered serenity, kindly and forbearing, sharing everything with everyone. He possessed unfailing optimism, and was outstanding for a sort of lovable pleasantness (*wohltuende Liebenswürdigkeit*), and not last in resolute energy....

"The driving force toward his numerous undertakings was not so much desire for sporting accomplishment as it was the deep love of mountains."

Writing in the *Journal*, of the American Alpine Club, I quoted part of a letter from an acquaintance Herron had made in India. He wrote of Herron:

"After the first few moments I realized that he was an exceptional man. That realization grew intense..."

"The gods appear to have treated harshly one possessing so finely tempered a spirit..."

Appendices
~~~~~



~~~~~

Appendix A

NOTES ON NANGA PARBAT

GEOLOGY

A STUDY of the very interesting geology of Nanga Parbat was made in 1930 and 1931 by D. N. Wadia, M.A., B.Sc., F.G.S., F.R.G.S., Assistant Superintendent, Geological Survey of India. I quote the following extract from his "Note on the Geology of Nanga Parbat and Adjoining Portions of Chilas, Gilgit District, Kashmir."

"Nanga Parbat, . . . elevation 26,620 feet, the culminating peak of the north-west Himalaya, rises in solitary eminence among the mountains of northern Kashmir, none of which, within a radius of 60 miles, attains an altitude of more than 17,000 feet. From the point of view of mountain morphology it is a peak of arresting grandeur, when compared with the shapeless mass of rock and glacier such as K₂, . . . or with the 'lumpy tetrahedron' of Mt. Everest itself. . . . Its southern flank exposes a rock face whose buttressed cliffs, 12,000 feet high, pierce the sky almost in one leap; while the naked escarpments which face to the east are no less abrupt and majestic. . . . to the north. . . . [it] ascends in one single stride 22,500 feet from the bed of the Indus within barely 14 miles.

"This slope is concealed under nearly 100 square miles of uninterrupted snow-fields, drained by a number of small glaciers, the three largest of which on the southern and eastern faces, descend nearly 8,000 feet below the snow-line. . . .

"A profile section through Nanga Parbat in any direction reveals a depth of dissection into the surface of the earth's crust that can but rarely be equaled in any other mountain region. The depth of vertical relief of the ground reaches the extraordinary total of 4½ miles within a relatively short horizontal distance. To the north, the ground level falls from 26,600 feet to below 3,500 feet at the Indus bed near Drang. . . . a radial distance of 14½ miles. To the west, it falls 23,600 feet in 17 miles; to the south, 20,000 feet in 31 miles and to the east, within 14 miles there is a drop of 19,600 feet to the Astor gorge. Nor do these figures express the maximum

The Naked Mountain

relief; for, within the main declivities on all sides, there are numerous abrupt scarps, deep gorges and basins of from 5,000 to 10,000 feet relief, which again and again break the main fall.

... The geology of Nanga Parbat proper is found to be, considered broadly, rather simple. The mountain-mass with its group of satellite peaks, is composed almost entirely of fine-grained, thinly-foliated, much-contorted, streaky, or slaty biotite-gneiss... the bulk of [it]... [probably] a transformation-product of a... group of pre-Cambrian sediments, with a notable calcareous and carbonaceous content, ... [found]... over wide areas in Hazara and north-western Kashmir.... The general strike of the foliation is, except for local variations, consistently N.E.-S.W.... The strike of the region to the east of Nanga Parbat trends in the main in the opposite direction, i.e. N.W.-S.E.

"The lofty massif of gneissic rocks, building Nanga Parbat and the associated group of peaks, [therefore] occupies a pivotal position with respect to the loop-like bend of the strike which takes place at this point in the central axis of the north-west Himalaya.... For though the Great Himalayan range does not extend beyond the Indus, yet it cannot be regarded as terminating as an orographical unit in Nanga Parbat. Instead, the fold-axes are bent [here] abruptly to the south-west."...

Further scientific details can be found in Mr. Wadia's article.

ANIMALS AND BIRDS

Around our base camp on Nanga Parbat there seemed to be surprisingly little animal life. Herds of oorial grazed near by on the mountainsides above tree-line, and through the glasses we had occasional glimpses of markhor and ibex. The coolies reported once seeing the track of a snow-leopard. But there was an unusual absence of small creatures close at hand—marmots, gophers, rock-rabbits, or similar rock-dwelling animals.

Instead, the rocks of the Moraine Hill were the home of birds, apparently a species of grouse, which we flushed in flocks every time we climbed it. Once the climbers found a baby one, and it was kept for a day or two as a pet, in the bottom of an empty zwieback tin. Carrion vultures, eagles, and a lammergeier also looked our camp over from above. At Camp Four finches were sometimes seen, flying by from over the 20,000-foot saddle to the south.

Appendices

WEATHER

Like most of the highest mountains, Nanga Parbat "makes its own weather." It often is hidden in clouds and storms while the surrounding regions are enjoying perfect weather.

According to general reports, our experience of seasonal changes was typical. Settled clear weather is much more likely to be found on the mountain in late June and July than in August. It seems probable, however, that snow conditions impossible for climbing—the winter powder encountered by the men at the end of August—would be found on the north side of the mountain until well along into June. It was our own observation that clouds and storms, especially those local to the mountain, seemed to come generally from the southern side, drifting in over the ridges, and we would often notice that their area was extremely limited. They seemed specially to center in the saddle just over Camp Four to the south-east. While staying there we observed that often Camp Four and the route on as far as Six would be under a cloud which would be snowing, while through its fringes we could see sunlight both above and below. Also from the base camp on a clear day we would often see a thick cloud resting over just that area.

It is therefore my own belief, in which other members of the Expedition concur, that climbers camped on the Ridge, if they had sufficient supplies so that they could afford to be indefinitely cut off from the camps below, might perhaps enjoy very advantageous weather for the push forward by the Northeast Peaks to the summit, even at times when it was unsettled farther down. As it is possible to travel on some of the lower parts of the route even actually during storms, the plan of campaign might then be to work disproportionately at pushing on supplies to the higher camps on good days, meanwhile living from hand to mouth at Camp Four, with confidence that in the bad days this camp could be replenished from the base by one group, while another using Camp Seven as an upper base, might perhaps be having really good weather to push on.

ROUTES

In changed conditions another year, it might be possible to vary the route up Nanga Parbat at various points. We ourselves abandoned the lower glacier route to the foot of the mountain, early in July, when crevasses began to open too widely and snow-bridges to weaken: thereafter we approached over the Moraine Hill. If the first ice-fall should prove impassable another year, the pos-

The Naked Mountain

sibility was discussed of finding a way on the left, over the Riff. Many slight variations could be made, if necessary, between Camps Two and Four. I have already discussed in several chapters the problem between Five and Seven.

In general plan and direction, there appeared to be no other possible route from Rakiot Nullah to the summit.

MAPS

The best map we found of Nanga Parbat and the surrounding region was that recently issued by the Survey of India. We were unable to find any which showed really satisfactorily and exactly the higher ridges and glaciers.

Appendix B

HIGH ALTITUDE DIET

The subject of diet in high altitudes is an extremely interesting one, which has apparently not yet received sufficient study. Although it may be that some expeditions have made elaborate experiments and researches, I have been unable to find any full record of the combining of present medical and physiological knowledge of the effect of high altitude on the system, with the practical experience of climbers.

Smythe on Kamet does speak of carrying lime juice to supply Vitamine C, but this is an essential element of a balanced diet at any altitude. Bauer had found on Kanchenjunga, and we benefited by his experience, that a great deal of sugar is desirable to replace speedily the unusual amount of heat and energy consumed in high altitude living. Most climbing books mention the desirability of special foods to tempt the feeble and choosy appetite of high altitudes, and our experience confirmed this. (Cf. Ch. XII, p. 150.)

But it would seem on the face of it that in our present state of food knowledge more could be done with diet than merely to supply the ordinary balanced menu of ordinary altitudes. It is known that living at high altitudes actually changes the composition of the blood, and medicines have been tried to counteract this effect. It would seem likely that there are other sorts of body changes, also, and that to supply necessary elements and maintain the body at the very highest point of physical fitness under these abnormal conditions a diet differing somewhat from the standard one would be more useful.

Appendices

But this is of course a matter for careful medical investigation and scientific study. The ignorant layman can only speculate.

Appendix C

CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT

We did practically all our outfitting in Germany, and found everything on the whole most satisfactory.

CLOTHES

For the mountain, we wore heavy wool underwear, flannel shirts, and the Expedition suits, made of a thick gray close-woven cloth, with long trousers. This outfit proved enough for ordinary weather. For extra, we carried sweaters and light windproof-cloth outer garments, and for storms heavy raincoats, wool aviators' helmets, and leather helmets with face masks and goggles.

Headgear in ordinary weather varied according to individual taste—sun helmets, felt hats, or close-fitting wind-helmets of the cloth of our wind-suits.

FOOTGEAR

A completely satisfactory boot for Himalayan climbing has not yet been found. The changes in the blood which occur during the process of acclimatization to high altitudes make the extremities much more susceptible to freezing, while at the same time the height prevents violent exercise to stimulate circulation. The body must also meet extremes of temperature, and the feet must be plunged at every step into the peculiar cold of powder snow.

Our boots proved on the whole as satisfactory as most, in these test conditions. They were regular mountain boots, nailed with tricounis—more lightly than usual, since nails conduct the cold—made specially large for several pairs of socks, lined with felt, and worn with lambs-wool inner soles. In spite of everything, however, the men were frequently troubled with their feet freezing.

Climbers on the Alaskan glaciers have tried out a radical departure from traditional mountain footgear—Barker boots or other soft waterproof boots with flexible soles, worn always with crampons to prevent slipping. Terris Moore also used these most successfully on Minya Konka in Thibet (24,000 feet). There seem obvious objections to them on such steep pitches as we found, and in such soft deep snow, often too damp and clogging for crampons to be de-

The Naked Mountain

sirable, often too light and powdery. But the idea certainly has possibilities.

SNOWSHOES AND SKIS

The snowshoes we had with us, a very heavy German kind with metal plates and a net of large meshed cords, proved of little value. We thought light American snowshoes, which would not make an appreciable weight to carry, would be worth trying another time, though the slopes might prove too steep for them.

Because of the steepness, skis would be of no value anywhere until the final plateau beyond the Northeast Peaks—except for the brief bit by Camp Four. It was thought, however, that short summer skis would certainly be desirable to take, simply for this highest plateau on the final push.

TENTS

Our tents, which I have previously described (Ch. VII, p. 83), proved, on the whole, suitable for every need. They were, however, rather heavy, from ten to fourteen pounds. It might be possible to reduce weight here, by using floors of ordinary tent material instead of the heavy black rubber which we had. Alaska climbers have reported that the less waterproof material has on snow the advantage of letting water out more freely, as well as in. Water from melting or condensation, once in our tents, lay about in pools and was difficult to dislodge.

We had only one very lightweight tent (about four pounds, small and low), which the climbers took with them to Camp Seven. It was decided that several like this would be useful, to carry on the final push, beyond where porters would go.

SLEEPING BAGS

We had sleeping bags made in Germany, from an adaptation of an American model. They had two layers of down, covered with cotton cloth and lined with a thin woolen, with removable outer covers of light waterproof cloth. In size they varied slightly, from about seven to seven-and-a-half, by three-and-a-half to four feet. They weighed about fourteen pounds.

Although I myself found I often needed an extra blanket or two with them, my personal experience is no criterion, as I am always a notoriously cold sleeper. Every one else reported himself amply warm in them except in the most extreme weather, and most of the men generally partially undressed.

Appendices

For protection underneath we had pads of spongy rubber, half to three quarters of an inch thick, featherweight and very comfortable. With these, air mattresses were not needed.

MINOR ITEMS OF EQUIPMENT

For snow goggles, we used the ordinary dark glasses, such as one buys very inexpensively anywhere in Switzerland, and I did not hear of any one, either sahibs or coolies, having any trouble with his eyes.

Trying out several glacial creams, we found Penaten most satisfactory, but nothing would prevent a continual slight burn and peeling in the dry air.

I had with me a little réchaud, or very small light-weight aluminum cooking outfit, to use with meta or other solid fuel. It was found so very light and convenient that it was decided that each one should have one another time, as an individual supplement for our larger stoves, or even as a substitute, in emergency.

One small item that we all much enjoyed was wind-proof matches, bought in Italy.

Appendix D

OXYGEN VS. ACCLIMATIZATION

It was decided not to carry oxygen, after careful consideration of the experience of other expeditions. The accomplishments of mountaineers on Everest and Kanchenjunga, both with and without oxygen, seemed conclusively to show that at least to a height of 26,000 to 27,000 feet, the height of Nanga Parbat, it was not necessary, and that its value did not pay for the weight of carrying it. Better results had seemed to be obtained by trusting to the natural processes of acclimatization.

Appendix E

ORIGINALS OF FOREIGN POEMS

Bergsteigerslied

(Melodie: "Die Seeräuber")

Frisch auf, Bergegefährten, der Morgen graut,
Steig hinauf zur sonnigen Höh,
In unsere Welt, über Wolken gebaut,
Lass im Tale Jammer und Weh.
In kurzer Wicht und Nagelschuh,

The Naked Mountain

Am grauen Berghut das Edelweiss,
Wir sind die Fürsten dieser Welt
Und unser Reich ist Fels und Eis.

Wo der Wände Flucht am steisten niederfaust,
Hei, da pack ich am liebsten sie an,
Ob der Steinschlag auch gellt,
Ob der Sturm mich umbraust,
Ich erkämpf mir mutig die Bahn.
Nach hartem Kampf der Gipfel fällt,
Laut ertönt unser he jua he.
Wir sind die Fürsten dieser Welt
Und unser Reich ist die sonnige Hoh.

* * *

Und hätt' ich einmal, wenn das Schicksal es will,
Ein tiefen Sturz getan,
So tret' ich, wie immer, gelassen und still,
Meine letzte Bergfahrt an.
Obs mir auch oben wohl gefällt,
Hei, das schafft mir keine Pein,
Wir waren Fürsten dieser Welt,
Und wir wollens auch oben sein.

POEMS OF RAND HERRON

Chongra Peak

Massa immane al tuo piede
massa immane di torri spezzettate
di ghiaccio opaco
bianco
che lungi dietro i prati dell' amena morena verde
in unabisso ignoto di ghiaccio
lenta discende,
masse infinite di ghiaccio
da ogni parte
alla tua roccia sospese
che giù verso le rotte torri di creta
a grandi masse si calano lente,
diritti e striati nevai
che riflettono a striscie il sole potente,
linee diritte infinite
che dal basso ad acuti angoli

Appendices

si tagliano da ogni lato,
caotiche masse di rocce sospese,
tagli caotici nei ghiacci
in alto attaccati:
nella curva convessa che contro il cielo
altissima a sinistra verso la tua cima acuta si reclina,
poi nella linea
che a destra
altissima
dalla tua cima a balzi
pianante discende,
nelle forme infinite
che dal basso all' alto
da oriente a occidente
in te riunisci,
tu parli tu parli o Chongra,
e al cielo
mille nuovi significati
che prio non aveva
dietro al profilo tuo eccelso
tu dai.

Dal Tetto Del Mondo

Solo in una minutissima tenda
posta lassù contro i fianchi altissimi e sterminati dell' immensa
lontana montagna
da tre giorni fra le nebbie
e la neve che incessante cade,
lì solo è l' amico.
Supino egli giace—.
Nella tenda, puntino perso nel bianco confuso uniforme
delle nebbie e delle enormi superposte muraglie di ghiaccio,
tutto il giorno come la notte giace,
apparecchia gualcosa da mangiare,
o legge le réclames dell' Ovomaltina.
Vorrebbe dormire finchè verrà il sole
ma già troppo ha dormito.
Supino, guarda i sottili incroci del telo verde translucido che
lo ricopre,
e da tre giorni,
così,
aspetta l' ora che verrà il sole....

The Naked Mountain

La Cresta Dei Dementi

Nell' eterno ghiaccio
lungi lunghi
sotto alla cresta
nel cielo sospesa,
da sessanta giorni
giorno per giorno
siamo accampati:
verso la cresta
verso la cresta
giorno per giorno
tende il pensiero:
a volta per volta
un nuovo inciampo
ci tien prigionieri
fra se e il pensiero
fermi nel campo.
Verso la cresta
nel cielo sospesa
bianchissima tutta
vorrei oggi partire
senza una corda
senza un compagno
senza un inciampo,
e il petto leggiero
il piede slegato
gli occhi in alto
salire salire
senza passo fermare
da solo ed ebbro
all' orlo eccelso
della cresta e del cielo.
E lì non fermarmi:
e passo per passo
dal trampolino supremo
continuare a salire,
fino ad eccedere
l' altezza del Monte.
Fino ad aver
sotto a me tutti i monti
di tutta la terra.

Appendices

Fino a poter
reclinare la testa,
e verso i piani
di tutto il mondo
cristallizzato
muto e sordo
dire sereno:
“sono arrivato”...

Ma lì e la cresta
e qui siamo noi.
Bianca immutabile
ci guarda pietosa
e forse ridendo
della nostra demenza.

Ma domani partiremo...
e poi torneremo.
Colla cresta in tasca
o anche il monte?
Dio stesso lo ignora.
Solo egli sa
che noi siamo dementi,
e che meritiamo
rimaner trucidati dal ghiaccio
e persi in eterno
ai fianchi del monte.

Lì, sotto alla cresta
immota e ridente.

Cambiamento

Radiante radiante era il mattino primo
e gaia al primo sole l' umida erba luceva
e i piccoli fiori sull' eccelso pendio, e le chiazzette di neve ancor
fresca,
e su nel cielo, ridente
nella sua bianchissima magnificenza il Monte.
Gioiva il ginocchio e il piede,
gioiva la gamba e l' esser mio alla salita
verso le gaie striscie bianche acciecati
dell' altissimo Monte.
Leggero salivo col sacco pesante

The Naked Mountain

la speranza nel cuore
la coscienza del diritto nello spirto esaltato,
il sole negli occhi.
Nel passo lento e regolare era la gioia contenuta
e gli occhi la distanza in altezza misuravano
fra il pianoro verde sottostante delle piccole tende
e noi
e gli altri campi in alto e l' altissimo Monte
e i cento altri luoghi;
e l' occhio dominava
e lo spirto dominava
e il cuore era padrone,
e il forte ritenuto passo
lento immancabile
gioiendo gioiendo
sempre più s' innalzava
per le scale del cielo ...
Poi sul pendio, qua e là sparpagliati
nella lenta salita
i portatori dell' Indo
ridendo e cantando
sotto i carichi
bianchi avanzavano anch' essi,
nelle loro vesti di lana
siluette in fila
contro l' alto qua e là
e contro le multiple ghiacciate cascate di bianco.

Rideva il sole
il sasso il fiore
il seracco il monte
il cielo—e noi anche...
—Tutto rideva—.

* * * *

... Notte
Al piede ho male
è corta la scarpa,
odiosa infinita
obbrobriosa la discesa.
Avanti son gli altri.
Son l' ultimo.
Non voglio correre.

Appendices

In fondo, laggiù,
il fuoco giallo del campo.
Mi siedo sull' erba.
Son solo, all' oscuro.
Abbasso il capo.
È l' ultima volta che sono sul monte
che ne tocco il suolo.
Abbasso il capo
fino all' erba fino alla terra
e la bacio
mentre in fondo
laggiù
vicino al fuoco gli altri
raccontano
rumorosi
quasi cantando
di buon umore quasi
gli avvenimenti dell' obbrobriosa disfatta...

Vorrei non scendere
mai più non scendere,
ma morir sul pendio,
la testa fra l' erba e i fiori solitari
in un bacio alla terra.

Rimango seduto a guardar la lontana fiamma,
rimango a lungo seduto.
Poi, lento,
riprendo la discesa ...

Fuga

Rami rotti
tronchi nudi
dementi moti di legno nero
fissati in tragiche posture
fra le stelle del nero cielo
in un mondo fermo tutto
per sinistro incanto—

lieve alito inebriante
salito nel silenzio
dalla fornace del deserto
della sprofondata valle—

immane spettro,

The Naked Mountain

trasparente lunare bianchezza
lungi in alto
dietro i morti abeti:

Nanga Parbat!
dei monti re
capo di tutte le valli
tremendo spirto
da mille altri monti nascosto
nelle tue nebbie quasi sempre involto,
siamo in fuga
siamo in fuga
e alla dipartita nostra
in un nuovo incanto
ancora c' involgi
mentre nella tua foresta a notte,
tre uomini che siamo
vitti e perduti e curvi,
tastoni erriamo sotto i sacchi
e inciampanti in mille rami
e tronchi giacenti.
E ogni tanto,
uomini vitti,
per stanca accoratezza al fascino pronti,
gli occhi alziamo,
e te vediamo stanotte cristallino e puro e immoto
nel cielo,
come parte spettrale
del cielo stesso.
E qui sotto mentre tu ci guardi
nell' aria calda di magico profumo
un albero morto
in eterno
tiene un ramo secco
in postura di braccio di uomo
che in sul momento viene ucciso.

Appendix F

LIST OF HERRON'S CLIMBS

Europe, 1925: *Dolomites*, Croda da Lago (traverse, Federa, Innerk);
Becco di Mezzodi; Cima Piccola di Lavaredo (Kleine Zinne);

Appendices

Cima Grande; Cima Cadin di Misurina; Torre Grande di Averau (four routes); Torre Romana; Torre Inglese; Cristallo (traverse); Croda Rossa (east wall); Tofana di Roces; Tofano di Mezzo; all guideless.

1926: *Dolomites*, Sassolungo (Langkofel); Punta Cinque Dite (Funffingerspitze); Torri Winkler, Stabler, Delago (Valojet towers); Rosengartenspitze (alone); Cimone della Pala; Rosetta (direct west wall); Marmolata (south wall); all guideless.

Lapland, 1927: (Western section in winter) Helagsfjallet (first winter ascent); Sulfjallet; Kebnekaise (alone); Mesatjakkko (three summits, first winter ascent); Reitatjakkko (first ascent); all guideless.

Africa, 1927: *Grand Atlas* (southern Morocco), Likoumt; north peak of Toubkal (4,225 meters); also east peak (alone).

Europe, 1927: *Pyrenees*, Pique Longue du Vignemale (alone). *Apuan Alps*, twelve ascents (rock), guideless.

Western Alps, Aiguille Joseph Croux; Aiguille du Géant; Aiguille de Rochefort; Mt. Mallet; Grandes Jorasses; Requin; Grépon; Grand Charmoz, west wall; Blaitière, north; Fou; Ciseaux; Verte; Dent des Bouquetins, north (traverse), guideless; Dent d'Herens (guideless); Matterhorn, traverse (south-north), guideless; Grépon (guideless); Mt. Blanc over Tacul and Maudit.

Central Apennines, Grand Sasso; Punta Intermesole, south wall (first ascent); the other summits, all guideless.

Corsica, 1928: Three ascents, alone.

Greece, 1928: Mt. Olympus (five summits); Parnassus; all alone.

Europe, 1928: *Western Alps*, Aiguilles de Trélatête (all three); Mt. Blanc over Aiguille Blanche, Péteret ridge, returning by Col du Géant, first traverse; Grandes Jorasses, southeast ridge, first ascent; attempt Grandes Jorasses north wall, surpassing previously reached points; Aiguille du Peigne (led part of climb); Grépon; guideless.

1929: *Viennese Alps*, four ascents (snow and rock), (led part of climb), guideless.

Grigna (Comasc Alps), three ascents (rock), (led part of climb), guideless.

Europe-Asia, 1929: *Caucasus*, Guilchi (first ascent); two unnamed peaks; Elbruz, on skis; all guideless.

Europe, 1930: *Sachsische Schweiz*, Dreifingerturm; Osterturm; Kreutzurm; Lokomotive; Ganz, and others (about twenty in all).

The Naked Mountain

Western Alps, Barre des Ecrins (led part of climb); Aiguille Rouge de Triplet; Grand St. Pierre (Gran Paradiso); Torre dell' Orso; Torre S. Andrea; Grivola, north ridge (led part of climb); Aiguille de Bionnassay, traverse (led part of climb); all guideless.

1931: *Alps*, North face of Pizzo di Pesciola (Zuccone dei Campelli, Alpi Orobie, north of Lecco) (new route); Brenva face of Mt. Blanc, west-east traverse of Tour Ronde; east ridge of Lyskamm; Dufour Spitze (Monte Rosa); north face of Corno Bianco (Monte Rosa), first ascent; south edge of Punta Fiammes, Ampezzo Dolomites. Kaisergebirge (northeastern Tirol): Totenkirchl (Herold route, Schneider route, Klammer chimney, Nieberl chimney, Dulfer-U route, Fiechtl-U route, Piaz route, direct west face, southeast ridge; Fleischbank (east face, southeast face); Predigstuhl (north edge, Fiechtl-Weinberger route, west gorge); Leuchsturm (south face).

Note: Climbs marked guideless led by Herron unless otherwise stated.

(Abbreviated from *Membership of the American Alpine Club*.)

Appendix G

SUMMARY OF EXPEDITION

- April 26: Expedition left Munich.
- May 9: Arrived Bombay.
- May 15: Arrived at Srinagar.
- May 23: Left Srinagar for caravan trip to Astor.
- May 31-June 5: At Astor.
- June 9: Left Doyan Camp.
- June 12-15: Buldar Nullah Camp.
- June 22: Arrived at temporary base camp.
- June 24: Departure of reconnaissance.
- June 26-July 1: Moved to permanent base camp.
- June 27: Camps One and Two established.
- June 30: Avalanche at Camp One.
- July 4: Camp Three established.
- July 9: Camp Four established.
- July 16: Ascent of Rakiot Peak.
- July 17: Camp Five established.
- July 19-21: Storm.

Appendices

July 23-30: Push to the Ridge.

July 25: Camp Six established.

July 30: Camp Seven established.

July 27: Kunigk left Camp Four with the Doctor for an appendicitis operation.

August 7-14: Long storm.

August 13: Aschenbrenner, Bechtold and Simon left Camp Four.

August 18: Ascent of Chongra Peak.

August 21: General departure for the base camp.

August 28-September 2: Final attack.

Index
~~~~~



## Index

Abdul Bhat, shikarri, 47, 78-9  
Afghanistan, 87, 131, 175  
Alps, 12, 142; Alpine ascent, 70, 146;  
Alpine glaciers, 127, 129  
Altimeter, 284  
Altitude, general effects of, 213, 229,  
317; on diet, 151; on climbing, 172-4;  
at Six, 195, 198, 202  
Aschenbrenner, Peter, 15; helps with  
preparations, 29-33, etc.; as scout, 81,  
88; in avalanche, 146-7; digs ice-cave,  
152-3; climbs Rakiot peak, 165-77;  
freezes foot, 190; leaves, 247  
Astor, 56, 57, 61, 68, 77-82  
Astori, 87-89, 93, 99-101  
Avalanches, 127-8, 146-7, 154, 158-60,  
236-7, 240, 270-271  
Azil, coolie, 274

Balti, 87-8, 93, 109  
Baltistan, 87  
Bandipur, 56, 61  
Base camp; temporary, 108, 110-11;  
permanent, 136-43  
Bechtold, Fritz, 13; helps with prepara-  
tions, photographic work, 31-2, etc.;  
as scout, 81, 88; scouts Buldar Nul-  
lah, 101-2; push to Ridge, 194-5;  
200-03, 206-9; leaves, 247  
Bhotias, 148-9, 296  
Bivouacs, 130, 166-7  
Bombay, 35-6  
Bruce, Captain (now General) C. G.,  
6-7  
Buldar Glacier, 12, 99-102  
Buldar Nullah, 98, 99-102  
Bunji, 8  
Burn, Lieutenant, 47-8  
Burzil Pass, 57-8, 65, 66, 69-73, 74  
Burzil, Chauki, 68-9, 72

Camps en route; above Doyan, 83-86;  
Elisabethsruhe, 91; Leychar Nullah,  
98; Buldar Nullah, 99; Fly Camp,  
103; Fairytale Camp, 103-07  
Camp One, 145, 146-7, 181, 271  
Camp Two, 145, 181-3, 260, 271-3  
Camp Three, 153-5, 186-8, 274, 285  
Camp Four, 162-3, 212-225, 274  
Camp Five, 177, 192-3, 210-11, 227-40,  
247, 277  
Camp Six, 189, 195-207  
Camp Seven, 205, 209  
Carpé, Allen, 160-1  
Chamonix Aiguilles, 12  
Chillas, 49-51, 137, 254; shepherds, 109  
Chillam, 5, 73-4  
Chongra Peak, 140, 141-2, 173, 203,  
253-6  
Collie, J. Norman, 6-7, 12  
Coolies, 94-7, etc. (*See* Hunza coolies.)  
Cook's Assistant, 136-7  
Cook's Son, 136  
Crampons, 101, 317  
Crevasses, 127, 155, 157, 167, 203, 230,  
231-2, 238

Dahe, 18, 29, 30, 33, 86  
Dak runner, 138, 264, 281  
Dard; country, 5; people, 75  
Diamarai Glacier, 7, 12, 104-5  
Diami Pass, 7  
Dofana, 175  
Dogs, 85-7  
Doyan, 82, 83, 87, 281

Expedition; origin of, 11-12; personnel,  
12-15; organization, 17-20; equip-  
ment, 18; Appendix C  
Elisabethsruhe, 91, 92  
Everest, 4, 11, 22, 27, 31, 309

Fairytale Camp, 103-7  
Fly Camp, 103  
Food, 122-3, 136, 137, 150, 151, 214,  
218-19, 235, 279-81, 285, 316

# Index

---

Frier, Lieutenant R. N. D., helps with coolie-transport, 77, etc., etc.; shoots ibex, 116-17; digs ice-cave, 163; leaves, 266

Ganalo Peak, 7, 173

Genoa, 19, 28

Gilgit, 73, 77, 87, 118, 138, 190, 247, 281-2

Godhai, 5

Gulmarg, 4, 8

Gurais, 67

Hadow, Major, 56

Hamberger, Doctor Hugo, 15; helps with preparations, 48; stays with Kunigk, 67; scouts Buldar Nullah, 101-2; climbs Chongra Peak, 256; leaves with Kunigk, 189-90

Haramosh, 141, 175

Hardt-Citroen Expedition, 115

Hastings, G., 6-7

Heda, 85-7

Herron, Rand, 12-14; helps with organization, 31, etc., etc.; scouts Buldar Nullah, 101-102; reconnaissance, 120-133; establishes Three, 153-6; push to Ridge, 192, 194-5, 200-204; caught at Five, 226-241; climbs Chongra Peak, 253-6; on final attack, 268-78; biographical sketch, 301-310

Himalayas, 11, 26, 38-9, 42, 56, 57, 68, 120, 141, 159

Hindu Kush, 92, 131, 175, 177

Hunza coolies, 79, 92-3, 94-7, 148-9, 162, 245, etc., etc.

Hunza Jemadar, 96, 109, 118, 138, 148, 163, 248, 269, 279, 280, 291-2

Hunza, village of, 79, 87, 118; mayor of, 79, 118

Ibex, 113, 116-117

Ice caves, 152-3, 156, 212-13

Ice-falls, 124, 128-33, 153, 194-5

India, 20, 28, 32, 34, 35, 57

Indus Valley, 8, 138

Irwin, Major, 56-57

Jammu, 36, 38, 39-42

Jhelum River, 45, 55, 65

Johnson, Colonel & Mrs., 55, 85

K2, 11, 175

Kaisergebirge, 13, 35, 222, 224

Kamri Pass, 5

Kanchenjunga, 4, 11

Karakorums, 84, 92, 111, 143, 175, 254

Kashmir, 36, 62, 65; Vale of, 4, 8, 42, 65

Kashmiri, 46, 53, 61-2, 67, 77-80

Khansama, cook, 136

Koven, Theodore, 160-161

Kunigk, Herbert, 15; helps with preparations, 33, etc.; sick at Gurais, 67; as scout, 88; reconnaissance, 120-33; establishes Three, 153-6; climbs Rakiot Peak, 165-77; leaves with appendicitis, 189-91; returns, 281

Lammergeier, 264, 314

Leychar Nullah, 98

Little Thibet, 87

Makalu, 11

Mallory, George Leigh, 22, 27, 309

Merkl, Willy, 13; work of organization, 30-33, etc.; push to Ridge, 194-5, 200-204; climbs Chongra Peak, 253-6; on final attack, 268-78

Mongols, 62, 69, 73

Mont Blanc, 14, 104

Mt. McKinley, 160-161

Moraine Hill (Great), 132-3, 140, 179, 180, 269, 282

Mountaineering, 22-27; rock-climbing, 23-25, 169, etc.; snow and ice climbing, 25; pleasure of, 180-1; fundamental feeling about, 161

Mulde, 165-6, 172, 174, 176-7, 198, 200-208, 210

Mummery, A. F., 6-8, 12, 23, 50, 88, 104-105, 167

Munich, 9, 13, 15, 292

Mushkin Forest, 83

Nahim Tessaldar, at Astor, 79, 88

Nanda Devi, 31

Nanga Parbat; "Naked Mountain," 3, 5; "Hidden Mountain," 4, 5; Diamir, 5; description, 3-5, 8; history, 6-8; legends, 5; geology, 313; climbability, 11-12; first views, 43, 76; drawing near, 83, 98; coolie fear of, 87-8; north face, 104, 111, 127, 140; route,

## Index

---

### Nanga Parbat—Continued

on, 104-5, 124-5; first plateau, 124-5, 132; second plateau, 124, 156; third plateau, 124, 153, 162; south face, 167, 173, 206; summit peak, 173, 175, 207; "finish" 283; last view, 294

North Peaks, 7

Northeast Peaks, 124, 140, 173, 175

Old Cook, 114, 135, 138

Oorial, 264, 314

Ovomaltine, 130-1, 226, 233, 237

Oxygen, 319

Pamirs, 250, 302

Pir Panjal, 4, 65

Plan of attack, 104-5, 145, 150-2, 162-3, 165-6, 210-11, 247-8, etc.

Political Agent, 77, 79, 118

Polo, 81

Postmaster at Astor, Pandit Dina Nath Durbari, 219

Primus stoves, 157, 162, 166, 232, 234-5

Rakaposhi, 84, 92, 141

Rakiot Bridge, 137

Rakiot Glacier, 12, 104, 124, 126, 128, 140, 143

Rakiot Nullah, 102, 104

Rakiot Peak, 104, 105, 124, 153, 163, 165-177; north ridge, 168; spur, 166-7, 198, 228-9

Rakiot Ridge, 163, 164, 165-6, 168, 173-5, 189, 198, 201, 203-204, 242

Ramana, cook, 80, 95, 126, 216, 218, 219-21, 241, 254, 274

Riff, 124, 153

Rope-work, 24-25, 126, 127, 156, 185-6, 259

Rupal Nullah, 6, 167, 173, 175, 206

Ruttledge, Hugh, 31-33

Seracs, 131, 154-5, 178, 183-4, 230

Sherpas, 148-9, 296

Shikara, boat, 44, 52-3, 54, 55

Shikarri, 44, 47, 113, 116-17, 149, 167

Shukar-Ali, coolie, 257, 273

Simon, Felix, 14; helps with preparations, 48, etc.; establishes One and Two, 145; push to Ridge, 192, 203; leaves, 247

Sirdar Chauki, 72, 74

Skis, 296, 318

Sleeping bags, 166, 167, 179, 182-3, 217, 318

Snowbridges, 132, 155, 232

Snowshoes, 296, 318

Soft snow, 129, 133, 166, 200-201, 204, 229-30, 272-4, 275, 284-5, 296

Srinagar, 42, 44-55

Tatto, 102, 266

Temperature, 130-31, 137, 179, 182, 214-16, 275

Tent-sack, 167

Tents, 84-5, 182, 232, 318

Tragbal Pass, 5, 57, 65-66

Wahab, bearer, 86, 139, 146-7, 153

Wazirabad, 36

Weather, 181-3, 227-8, 234, 236, 238, 240, 245, 246-9, 266-8, 275-6, 315, etc.

Wiessner, Fritz, 14; helps with organization, 40, etc.; handles transport, 49, etc.; bag lost, 107-8; in avalanche, 146-7; push to Ridge, 192, 204, 206-207; holds sliding coolie, 211; climbs Chongra Peak, 253-6; on final attack, 268-78; falls in crevasse, 285-7

Wood-Johnson, George, 296

Wular Lake, 56, 65

Yaghistan, 87